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INTRODUCTION

STORIES OF THE WAR YEARS 1939-1945

THE HEROES of World War Two were instrumental in the Allied victory over the literal forces of evil – the Axis of Nazi Germany, Fascist Italy, and Imperial Japan. They rose to the occasion, sacrificed themselves willingly, went into harm's way to protect their fellow soldiers, sailors, and airmen, and of course their homelands.

When Adolf Hitler plunged Europe into the greatest armed conflict in human history, there were doubts – about survival, justice, human rights, and the real possibility that the world would be forcibly dragged into a new Dark Age. As the war widened and became a global trial, humankind rose up against the embodiment of evil. How?

The response to the spectre of Nazism, the haunting of militarism and barbaric conquest in the Far East and on the continent of Asia, and the jack boot of Fascism in the Mediterranean Basin and East Africa was one of collective resolve, galvanised purpose, determined leadership, the harnessing of industry to produce the weapons and equipment to win a global war. And then, there was the individual soldier, sailor, and airman willing to fight, willing to exhibit the necessary raw courage in the heat of battle that led to the ultimate victory.

These are the stories of but a few men and women who stood against the evil Axis, offering their lives, and in many cases their glorious youth, to something larger than themselves, the noble cause of freedom and the evisceration of tyranny. Their deeds, done willingly, conjure emotions of awe and incredible admiration. Then, they give us pause to consider our own response in such a great time of peril.

The young RAF pilots in their Spitfires and Hurricanes that persevered during the Battle of Britain; the intrepid Marines who splashed ashore at Tarawa in the first harrowing amphibious assault contested on the beaches of an otherwise nondescript Pacific atoll; the seamen who ran the gauntlet of the Atlantic convoys knowing that at any moment a German torpedo might compel them to abandon ship, left to their fate in the cold Atlantic; the US Navy carrier pilots that pressed home attacks against the mighty Imperial Japanese Navy; and the waves of infantrymen that splashed ashore in Normandy while German machine-gun bullets twisted in the sands of Gold, Juno, Sword, Utah, and Omaha beaches; those who conducted the shadow war, striking as they were able against the Nazi occupation and risking torture and painful death at the hands of the heinous Gestapo – these are the heroes of World War Two.

We cannot conceive, cannot exhibit, and cannot honour their memory as fully as we might wish. However, we can appreciate their stories. We can salute them. And we can keep the memory of their heroism alive. Again, while the stories of just a few are within these pages, remember that there are others worthy of praise and high esteem – others who answered the call of duty and gave their utmost in defence of the free world.

Michael Haskew
Editor

BELOW Heroes all. RAF, Free French, Canadian, Czech and South African Hurricane pilots of 615 Squadron pictured in November 1940, shortly after the RAF's Battle of Britain victory.
Key Publishing

An air observer keeps watch on the skies above London during the Battle of Britain. The defeat of the Nazi Luftwaffe ended the threat of invasion of the British Isles.
Public Domain

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1939 - 1945

6 Years of Retreat

For the western Allies, the early days of World War Two were bleak. Great Britain stood alone for months against Nazi Germany, and when Japan bombed Pearl Harbor and the United States became a belligerent, the marauding enemy advanced from victory to victory in the Pacific. However, stalwart acts of bravery kept hope alive, hope that there would soon be a turning of the tide.

14 The War in the Western Skies

From the Battle of Britain to the round-the-clock bombing of the Third Reich and the tactical tank busting that decimated the German Army in the west, intrepid fighter and bomber pilots of the Royal Air Force and the US Army Air Forces etched their names in the pantheon of heroes who carried the fight to the enemy with determination, winning mastery of the air and bringing swift retribution to a wicked enemy.

24 North Africa and the Eastern Mediterranean

The heroes of the Desert War defeated the vaunted Panzerarmee Afrika and the crafty Desert Fox, the seemingly invincible General Erwin Rommel. The Eighth Army endured setbacks but proved resilient and drove the enemy before it, across hundreds of miles of trackless wasteland. At the same time *Operation Torch* brought Allied troops to North African shores at Oran, Algiers, and Casablanca. The German and Italian forces on the continent, then, were utterly beaten.

34 The War in the Western Seas

Sink the *Bismarck*! The cry went forth, and the Royal Navy exhausted every available weapon of war to destroy the great menace. Protecting the trans-Atlantic convoys that were the lifeline of the British Isles made the difference between victory and defeat in World War Two. The Allied navies fought the U-boats, wresting the initiative from them, and blunted the threat of the Axis on the high seas.

42 Spies and Special Operations

Clandestine operations, intelligence gathering, and harassment of the Axis enemy contributed to the Allied war effort immeasurably, and some of these endeavours have yet to be fully acknowledged – remaining unknown simply because there is no one to bear witness. Information and misinformation, creating chaos behind enemy lines, and compelling the adversary to commit resources that might have been employed elsewhere, hastened the day of victory.

52 Resistance in Western Europe

War in the shadows, underground, and hidden until the moment to strike kept the Nazis off balance. Risking their lives to confound the enemy wherever possible, resistance fighters sprang to action across occupied Europe. They endured betrayal, torture, and execution to fight oppression. Willingly they often paid with their lives. But the result of their labour in the cause of freedom is apparent to this day.

58 Holocaust

The most horrendous example of man's inhumanity to man in the modern era will certainly not be forgotten. Genocide on such a grand scale, persecution and atrocities that are so monstrous they defy description, is the legacy of the Nazi regime. Still, even in the darkest of chapters in human history, there were those who stood for right and justice. The light of their heroism has never dimmed.

66 Southeast Asia

Japanese expansionism in Southeast Asia was lightning fast. After the occupation of northern Indochina, the insidious land grab swept through the region like wildfire. Prime Minister Winston Churchill bemoaned the fall of Singapore as a catastrophe. However, Allied forces on land, sea and air were resilient, and the heroes of the war in the jungle, across rugged mountains and swiftly flowing rivers, wrote stirring chapters in the annals of modern combat.

74 Italy

The Allied offensive in Sicily and the Italian mainland in the summer of 1943 established a southern front in the fight against the Nazis and the teetering Fascist regime of Benito Mussolini in Rome. Through rugged mountains and against determined enemy resistance, Allied armies advanced at tremendous cost. Although the war in Italy was relegated to a secondary priority after June 6, 1944, the valour of the fighting men who liberated the Eternal City and took the fight to the enemy in the Mediterranean Theatre inspires to this day.

80 Pacific

From Pearl Harbor to Tokyo Bay, World War Two in the Pacific was waged across thousands of miles of ocean. The bitterness of December 7, 1941 was – in four years – swallowed up in the surrender of the Japanese on September 2, 1945. During the intervening years, however, American fighting men stormed the beaches of enemy-held islands. The heroic stories of the island hopping offensive and perseverance in the Pacific continue to resonate with readers.

80 US Marines advance through the jungle on Guadalcanal in the Solomon Islands of the South Pacific. The Americans defeated the Japanese in six months of bitter combat. **Public Domain**

88 War in the Eastern Seas

Great modern fleets waged war across the expanse of the Pacific from 1941 to 1945, and the epic battles that turned the tide of World War Two hinged on the heroism of those who fought these decisive engagements. Airmen pressed home attacks in the face of furious flak, and sailors manned battle stations as warships engaged in the last major ship versus ship engagements in military history. Their stories are riveting.

96 The War in the Eastern Skies

From the decks of aircraft carriers and the dusty airfields hacked from jungle or blasted out of coral, courageous Allied airmen flew desperate missions against the Imperial Japanese Navy and fought enemy airmen for control of the skies above the Pacific and the Asian continent. Fighter pilots engaged in twisting dogfights while the bombers brought needed air support to tactical operations and great waves wrought devastation against Japanese cities.

104 D-Day to Victory

The Allied landings in Normandy heralded the day of liberation and the end of Nazi tyranny. From the bloodletting and human drama of the beaches, through the bocage country, and across the frontier of the Third Reich, the Allied offensive in Western Europe was relentless, and within a year the Nazis were beaten. World War Two in Europe ended on May 7, 1945, and the heroism of individual soldiers who executed countless acts of courage made the hope for victory a reality.

Editor: Mike Haskew
Assistant editor: James Hoare
Senior editor, specials: Roger Mortimer
Email: roger.mortimer@keypublishing.com
Design: Dan Jarman
Head designer: Steve Donovan
Advertising Sales Manager: Brodie Baxter
Email: brodie.baxter@keypublishing.com
Tel: 01780 755131
Advertising Production: Rebecca Antoniades
Email: rebecca.antoniades@keypublishing.com

SUBSCRIPTION/MAIL ORDER
Key Publishing Ltd, PO Box 300,
Stamford, Lincs, PE9 1NA
Tel: 01780 480404 **Fax:** 01780 757812
Subscriptions email: subs@keypublishing.com
Mail Order email: orders@keypublishing.com
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PUBLISHING
Group CEO: Adrian Cox
Publisher: Mark Elliott
Head of Publishing: Finbarr O'Reilly
Chief Publishing Officer: Jonathan Jackson

Key Publishing Ltd, PO Box 100,
Stamford, Lincs, PE9 1XP
Tel: 01780 755131
Website: www.keypublishing.com

PRINTING
Precision Colour Printing Ltd, Haldane,
Halesfield 1, Telford, Shropshire. TF7 4QQ

DISTRIBUTION
Seymour Distribution Ltd, 2 Poultry Avenue,
London, EC1A 9PU
Enquiries Line: 02074 294000.

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Cover image
UK edition: British 8th Army in Catania, Sicily.
Alamy Images/Charles Phelps Cushing. Colourised by colourbyrjm
Rest of World edition: Looking for the Enemy. Getty Images/Terry J

YEARS OF RETREAT

SEPTEMBER 1, 1939 - JUNE 4, 1940

YEARS OF posturing, rhetoric, and appeasement came to a sudden, violent end on September 1, 1939 as Hitler's armoured spearheads rolled across the Polish frontier, Stuka dive bombers screamed down on ground targets to unleash their deadly cargoes, and the Nazis told the world that their onslaught was in response to a provocation from their neighbour to the east.

The report was yet another lie, and the negotiation and political jousting abruptly ended in the opening moments of World War Two. The German armed forces committed 60 infantry divisions, approximately 1.5 million soldiers, 1,300 bomber and fighter aircraft, and 2,000 tanks to the aggression. The Blitzkrieg, or Lightning War, overwhelmed the proud Poles, while days later the Soviet Red Army invaded as well. In five weeks Poland was prostrate, the Germans were in the streets of Warsaw, and Europe had been plunged into another catastrophic conflict.

Although Hitler had not expected the major Western powers, Britain and France, to honour their treaty obligations to come to Poland's aid, he had miscalculated. On September 3, 1939, both nations declared war on Nazi Germany. At the time, France possessed the largest land army in Europe, while Britain mobilised its expeditionary force and deployed to the continent. By the spring of 1940, the number of British soldiers opposing the Germans would grow to 400,000.

Despite his strategic error, Hitler and the Nazi war machine had seized the initiative in the early days of the war. The British and French were content to watch and wait, sitting behind the fortifications of the Maginot Line, a fixed chain of bunkers and artillery emplacements that guarded the French border with Germany but did not extend along the boundary with Belgium nor to the expanse of the North Sea. The lull that followed the collapse of Poland became derisively known as the 'Sitzkrieg' or 'Phoney War'. For months, neither side mounted a significant offensive, and the soldiers that stared at one another from opposing sides even refrained from shooting.

All that changed on April 9, 1940, as German forces swept to victory over Denmark and Norway in combined land, sea, and airborne assaults. Then, on May 10, Hitler authorised *Fall Gelb*, Case Yellow, and the German Army rolled into France and the Low Countries (Belgium, the Netherlands, and Luxembourg). World War Two in the West was suddenly real. The Germans executed a simple plan that rendered the fortifications of the Maginot Line irrelevant. Their tanks manoeuvred around it, through the thickly wooded Ardennes Forest, skirting the fixed defences and rushing toward the English Channel, reaching that objective on May 21.

The audacious German plan had taken the British and French by surprise, threatening to cut off hundreds of thousands of Allied soldiers north of the German thrust to the Channel. There was no course of action but retreat, and the British Expeditionary Force (BEF) did so grudgingly, while the French fought here and there with dogged determination. However, German flanking movements made any stand of consequence virtually impossible.

An Allied counterattack at Arras showed promise, but early gains could not be exploited due to a lack of ready reserves. Soon, the spectre of defeat had gripped the Allied high command, and plans were made to evacuate as many troops of the BEF and their French and Belgian comrades as possible. Willingly, Allied soldiers sacrificed themselves, delaying the German juggernaut at Boulogne and Calais while the bulk of the Allied armies concentrated on the port of Dunkirk, where an epic seaborne evacuation effort, *Operation Dynamo*, brought an armada of vessels large and small, military and civilian, across the 20-mile expanse of the Channel from Dover and the smaller seaside towns of Ramsgate, Margate, and others, to rescue the trapped men so they might live to fight another day.

Amid the chaos and uncertainty of retreat, heroes of the dark days of 1940 displayed immense courage. They bought precious time for their fellow soldiers to escape the clutches of the Nazis, and from May 26 to June 4, nearly 340,000 Allied soldiers were sealifted to safety in England. These soldiers became the nucleus of the resurgent Allied effort that rose again to fight the Axis powers in North Africa and in Europe four years later.

Hitler had inadvertently helped the Allied cause, halting his marauding armoured and infantry columns that were squeezing the British and French into an ever-shrinking pocket at Dunkirk to allow Reichsmarschall Hermann Göring and the Luftwaffe to bomb and strafe the enemy into submission, delivering the coup de grace from the air. Göring could not deliver on his boast, and the tanks started forward once again; however, the window of opportunity allowed thousands of Allied troops to escape the cauldron at Dunkirk.

The valour of the heroes that resolutely opposed the Nazis in those dark days of retreat resonates across the decades, and it may be said that the road to victory began in 'glorious defeat' and evacuation at Dunkirk. Because of these heroes, plans were being laid to confront the Nazi enemy once again, even as the jackboots of their infantry and the treads of their tanks tromped and clanked down the Champs Élysée in Paris.

ABOVE French soldiers man the formidable defences of the Maginot Line, which was bypassed by the attacking Germans in the spring of 1940. **Public Domain**

LEAD PICTURE Soldiers of the British Expeditionary Force arrive in France shortly after the outbreak of World War Two. Many of these men perished, while others were rescued at Dunkirk. **Public Domain**

ABOVE German dive bombers attack the town of Dunkirk and soldiers on the beach. The courage of men like Capt Marcus Ervine-Andrews allowed thousands of Allied troops to evacuate. **Public Domain**

CAPTAIN MARCUS ERVINE-ANDREWS

July 29, 1911 – March 30, 1995

British Army | Victoria Cross

ABOVE Irish-born Capt Marcus Ervine-Andrews led a small group of British soldiers in defence of the perimeter at Dunkirk on June 1, 1940. **Public Domain**

COMMANDING AN infantry company of the 1st Battalion, East Lancashire Regiment, Irish-born Captain Marcus Ervine-Andrews fought with incredible tenacity in defence of the beachhead at Dunkirk. Early on the morning of June 1, 1940, his command was obliged to defend 1,000 yards of the Dunkirk perimeter, although its numbers were inadequate for the task, and it was clear that the approaching enemy force was significantly larger. The 28-year-old officer took immediate action when his command began absorbing heavy enemy fire as the Germans crossed the Canal de Bergues, an eight-mile-long waterway connecting the interior community of Bergues with the port of Dunkirk and the English Channel.

As large numbers of German infantry approached, Capt Ervine-Andrews asked for volunteers. With a few accompanying soldiers, he looked upward and decided to occupy the roof of a nearby barn. From this vantage point, the little band of defenders opened fire. Singlehandedly, Ervine-Andrews shot 17 German soldiers with his rifle. The handful of British defenders then employed a Bren gun to shred the exposed German soldiers as they crossed the canal. When the barn caught fire and available ammunition was exhausted, the captain ordered his wounded soldiers evacuated aboard a Bren gun carrier. He subsequently led the remaining eight men under his command to safety, swimming or wading through water up to their chins for a distance of more than a mile.

Ervine-Andrews attained the rank of lieutenant colonel and was the last Irishman to receive the Victoria Cross in World War Two. His citation was published in the July 30, 1940, edition of *The London Gazette.* Ervine-Andrews returned to Ireland after the war but was forced to leave his native County Cavan following threats from the Irish Republican Army. He lived out his days in Cornwall and died at the age of 83 in 1995.

LIEUTENANT COMMANDER GERARD ROOPE

March 13, 1905 – April 8, 1940

Royal Navy | Victoria Cross; Norwegian War Medal

ABOVE Lt Cdr Gerard Roope was posthumously awarded the Victoria Cross following a recommendation from a German naval officer.
Public Domain

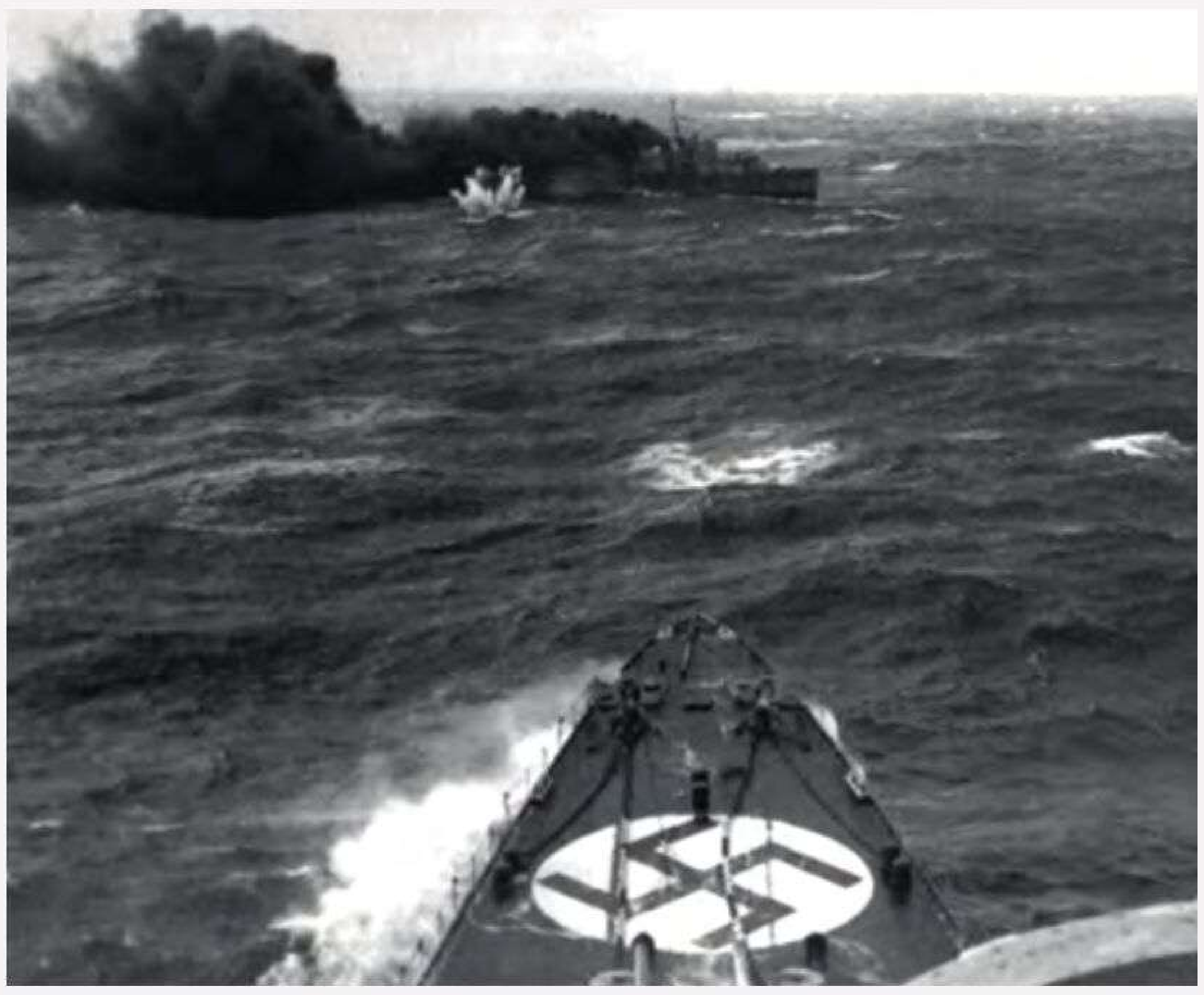
HMS *GLOWWORM* was a tiny vessel of war, a destroyer of the British Royal Navy commissioned in 1936 and displacing just 1,370 tons. However, *Glowworm* was crewed by stout-hearted sailors, and their leader, Lt Cdr Gerard Roope, was willing to fight like a lion.

On April 8, 1940, *Glowworm* came upon the Kriegsmarine cruiser Admiral Hipper, a recent addition to the Nazi navy that displaced 16,170 tons and mounted a main battery of eight 8-inch guns, dwarfing the British destroyer in both firepower and sheer size. That fateful morning, *Glowworm* had detached from a Royal Navy squadron off the coast of Norway to search for a crewman that had gone overboard. Lookouts soon spotted a pair of enemy destroyers. Without hesitation, Lt Cdr Roope ordered an attack. A salvo from *Glowworm*'s 4.7-inch guns struck one of the enemy ships, and they retired north.

Roope knew these Germans were attempting to lure him toward larger enemy warships, but his blood was up, and the pursuit maintained. A short time later, *Admiral Hipper* was sighted in the heaving seas. Aware that escape was improbable, Roope ordered an attack. *Glowworm* loosed five torpedoes, but none of them struck home. Meanwhile, the longer range of the German guns was telling as the heavy cruiser kept the destroyer in sight. Battered by large shells, *Glowworm* fired five more torpedoes. Again, all missed – but *Hipper* was required to change course, taking evasive action.

Seeing no alternative, Roope ordered the damaged *Glowworm* to flank speed, intent on ramming the big German cruiser. From 400 yards distant, *Glowworm* fired a salvo, and shells struck *Hipper*. The ponderous cruiser was unable to steer clear of the oncoming British destroyer, and the little ship knifed into *Hipper*'s starboard side, tearing off 130 feet of armour belt, destroying torpedo tubes, and severing an anchor. Roope gave orders to abandon the doomed *Glowworm*, but when the Germans picked up survivors he was not to be found.

On February 12, 1946, Roope's widow accepted the gallant officer's posthumous Victoria Cross. Interestingly, the award was confirmed partially due to input from the commander of *Hipper*, Kapitän zur See Hellmuth Heye, who wrote a recommendation for the medal to the Admiralty.



LEFT The damaged destroyer HMS *Glowworm* makes smoke and crosses the bow of the German cruiser Admiral Hipper during their 'David versus Goliath' battle.
Public Domain

CHARLES LIGHTOLLER

March 30, 1874 – December 8, 1952

Royal Navy; Civilian | Distinguished Service Cross with Bar

ON THE night of April 15, 1912, Charles H. Lightoller, 2nd officer of the RMS *Titanic*, survived the sinking of the great passenger liner. He was remembered for strict enforcement of the loading of women and children first aboard the lifeboats.

Lightoller subsequently served with the Royal Navy during World War One, rising to the rank of lieutenant commander and receiving the Distinguished Service Cross and Bar for a second award for heroism on two occasions. Lightoller commanded torpedo boat HMTB *117* during a battle with a German Zeppelin and later commanded the destroyer HMS *Garry*, which sank the German submarine UB-*110*.

Twenty-eight years after the *Titanic* tragedy, Lightoller, aged 66, leaped to action when the call was raised for civilians to provide small craft for the great rescue of Allied soldiers from the harbour of Dunkirk. Along with his son, Charles, and Gerald Ashcroft, an 18-year-old Sea Scout, Lightoller took his personal motor yacht, *Sundowner*, just 52 feet long, to sea during *Operation Dynamo*. When the Royal Navy offered to sail *Sundowner*, Lightoller declined, declaring, "If anyone is going to take her over, my eldest son and I will!"

On the morning of June 1, 1940, Lightoller departed Ramsgate. Three hours later, a marauding German

ABOVE The 52-foot pleasure craft Sundowner, sailed to Dunkirk by Charles Lightoller, is preserved today at Ramsgate. **Creative Commons**

LEFT Charles Lightoller was the highest-ranking officer to survive the sinking of Titanic and nearly 30 years later sailed to Dunkirk to evacuate British soldiers. **Public Domain**

fighter attempted three times to shred the little craft with machine-gun fire. Lightoller, however, deftly turned each time to frustrate the Nazi pilot.

That afternoon, Lightoller gave instructions to the men piling into *Sundowner*. “Having passed the word for every man to lie down and not to move, the same applied on deck,” he recalled. “By the time we had 50 on deck I could feel her getting distinctly tender so took no more. Actually, we had 130 on board.”

Lightoller and *Sundowner* survived the peril of Dunkirk.

Although names were changed, Lightoller’s story is central to the 2017 film Dunkirk. *Sundowner* was restored in 1990 and is on display in Ramsgate’s Royal Harbour.

SERGEANT MAJOR GEORGE GRISTOCK

January 14, 1905 – June 16, 1940

British Army | Victoria Cross

ABOVE Coy Sgt Maj George Gristock silenced a German machine gun during desperate fighting in France and later died of his wounds. **Public Domain**

GEORGE GRISTOCK, the South African-born son of a British Army sergeant major of the 2nd Dragoon Guards (Queen’s Bays), was known for two things – that is until the difficult days of World War Two in 1940.

Gristock rose to the same rank and served in the same unit as his father, who later became the riding master at the Royal Military Academy, Sandhurst. It followed logically that George would become one of the finest horsemen and trick riders in the British Army. And he was also known as a hard drinker, often engaging in days-long binges.

Enlisting just after his 14th birthday, Gristock spent 21 years in the British Army before World War Two, and 16 of these were with the cavalry. In 1935, he transferred to the 2nd Battalion, Royal Norfolk Regiment, allocated to the British Expeditionary Force and landed in France in the opening weeks of the conflict. Just before the regiment deployed, Gristock was promoted sergeant major and given command of a platoon; however, the advancement did not come without struggle due to his well-known bouts with the bottle.

In France, Gristock proved himself a leader of men and was elevated to company sergeant major. In May 1940, a quick thrust into Belgium to oppose the German advance toward the French frontier was followed by a series of withdrawals until the regiment was ordered to dig in and make a stand along the River Escaut.

On May 21, a German attack broke through the thin British line to Gristock’s right, and an enemy machine gun was taking a heavy toll among his men. Gristock and another soldier went forward to silence the weapon. Along the way, Gristock was wounded in both legs, but continued to within 20 yards of the enemy position. He shot four Germans and put the machine gun out of action before dragging himself back to the defensive line. Although seriously injured, he refused evacuation until contact with battalion headquarters was secured and the line steadied.

Gristock died three weeks later. His Victoria Cross citation was published on August 23, 1940, and an officer wrote to his father, “You had a son to be proud of indeed.”

ABOVE Soldiers of the 2nd Battalion, Royal Norfolk Regiment, receive a rum ration before going out on patrol in France in February 1940. **Public Domain**

ABOVE Adolf Hitler arrives in the forest of Compiegne prior to the surrender of France to the Nazis on June 22, 1940. The surrender took place in the same rail car in which the Germans had capitulated to end World War One. **Public Domain**

JEHAN ALAIN

February 3, 1911 – June 20, 1940

French Army | Croix de Guerre

THE DISPATCH was an expert with a motorcycle, and when an urgent message had to be delivered or enemy dispositions determined, superior officers of the Eighth Motorised Armour Division could count on his courage and his ability to ride swiftly and get the job done.

On June 20, 1940, Jehan Alain had taken on another dangerous assignment during the Battle of Saumur. These were desperate days, and the invading Germans appeared unstoppable in their offensive across France. Officer cadets from the nearby French Army Cavalry School were making a heroic stand along the banks of the River Loire, and the enemy positions and strength in the area had to be assessed.

Alain had served in the French Army in 1933-34 and nearly died of pneumonia; during his country's time of peril he was recalled. On this day, he was ordered to reconnoitre the front east of Saumur and dutifully sped away on his motorcycle. A short time later, near the village of Le Petit-Puy, he rounded a curve and halted, hearing the noise of approaching German vehicles. Alain abandoned his motorcycle and engaged the Germans with his carbine, killing 16 of them before losing his own life. The defence of Saumur was a heroic chapter in the history of the French Army, and Alain had delivered his own contribution to its valorous record. However, France was doomed, and two days later the nation's leaders surrendered to the Nazis.

When he died, Alain was said to have had music papers blowing in the breeze around his body. If true, it was a fitting coda to a soldier who was famous as an organist and composer before World War Two. Born into a family of famous instrumentalists and composers, Alain had received many awards and produced approximately 120 musical works. Some accounts of his death relate that those pages of music were the full orchestration of his final work, *Trois Danses*, pulled by the wind out of the open window of a passing train as he proceeded down the country lane to his destiny.

LEFT Renowned French composer Jehan Alain was killed in action during the final days of the Battle of France in 1940. **Public Domain**

CAPTAIN RICHARD STANNARD

August 21, 1902 – July 22, 1977

Royal Navy | Victoria Cross; Distinguished Service Order

ABOVE Capt Richard Stannard displayed courage during a difficult four days of fighting during the ill-fated Allied 1940 campaign in Norway. **Public Domain**

THE ALLIED campaign in Norway in 1940 ended in failure, but there were moments of supreme heroism and sacrifice, nevertheless. Richard Stannard, a 37-year-old lieutenant of the Royal Naval Reserve, displayed conspicuous gallantry in action several times at the port of Namsos during four harrowing days from April 28 to May 2.

Commanding the trawler HMT *Arab* of the Royal Navy Patrol Service, Stannard and a pair of sailors fought a blaze ignited by a German bomb that endangered the entire jetty. Their effort was particularly hazardous as ammunition cooked off due to the raging fires. Stannard had pushed *Arab*'s bows against the wharf, ordered the majority of the crew aft to relative safety, and then directed the trawler's water hoses against the conflagration. Saving portions of the facilities proved significant during the subsequent evacuation of Allied troops from the port.

ABOVE The bodies of British soldiers killed in action during the fighting in Norway lie by the side of a road. **Public Domain**

Stannard exercised cool command, assisting other vessels, and establishing a camp on shore, where sailors could find a brief respite. He moved *Arab* safely away from another stricken ship that exploded a short time later, fought off 31 air attacks, and maintained anti-submarine patrols.

As HMT *Arab* sailed away from the port of Namsos, a German bomber appeared overhead. The confident pilot believed he had the trawler cornered and signalled that the ship should steer eastward and into captivity or face certain destruction from above. Coolly, Stannard waited until the enemy bomber approached within 800 yards. *Arab*'s guns opened fire and shot the German plane down in flames. Stannard subsequently sailed his damaged trawler back to England. King George VI presented the officer with the Victoria Cross at Buckingham Palace on September 3.

On February 4, 1943, Stannard was commanding the destroyer HMS *Vimy* and participated in the sinking of the German submarine *U-18*. He received the Distinguished Service Order for that action.

FLIGHT LIEUTENANT JAMES NICOLSON

April 29, 1917 – May 2, 1945

Royal Air Force | Victoria Cross; Distinguished Flying Cross

ABOVE The Hawker Hurricane was the workhorse of RAF Fighter Command during the Battle of Britain. **Public Domain**

LEFT While recovering from injuries sustained in aerial combat, Flt Lt James Nicolson (centre) receives visiting RAF officers. **Public Domain**

CONTROL OF the air was a prerequisite for the Nazis planning an invasion of Britain in 1940, and the Royal Air Force was all that stood between salvation and the unthinkable. The Battle of Britain raged for nearly four months, July 10-October 31, and when it was over the intrepid RAF fighter pilots had denied air supremacy to the Nazis, shooting down so many Luftwaffe planes that the threat of invasion was thwarted.

There were many heroes among the young RAF pilots who fought and died and won glory as aces – or merely as survivors of the great air engagements. Unique among them, though, is the story of Flight Lieutenant James Nicolson. On August 16, Nicolson climbed into the cockpit of his Hawker Hurricane fighter plane on the field at RAF Boscombe Down near Salisbury.

Moments after taking off, a German Messerschmitt Me-110 fighter attacked him, and four 20mm cannon shells slammed into his plane, wounding the pilot in the foot and eye, and setting the Hurricane on fire. As the intensity of the flames grew, Nicolson prepared to bale out. However, he then spotted a second Me-110 and decided to remain aboard, firing at the enemy aircraft until it fell away, burning furiously.

While attacking the Me-110, Nicolson sustained serious burns, but only after the German plane was going down did he abandon his own stricken fighter, parachuting safely to the ground, even though he was fired on by members of the Home Guard who ignored his cries that he was an RAF pilot.

Nicolson's citation for the Victoria Cross was published in *The London Gazette* on November 15, 1940. He was the only pilot to be presented the prestigious medal for action during the Battle of Britain and the only pilot of RAF Fighter Command so honoured during World War Two. He later rose to the rank of wing commander and led 27 Squadron in Burma, receiving the Distinguished Flying Cross. Tragically, he was killed in the crash of a bomber in 1945.

GROUP CAPTAIN GEOFFREY LEONARD CHESHIRE

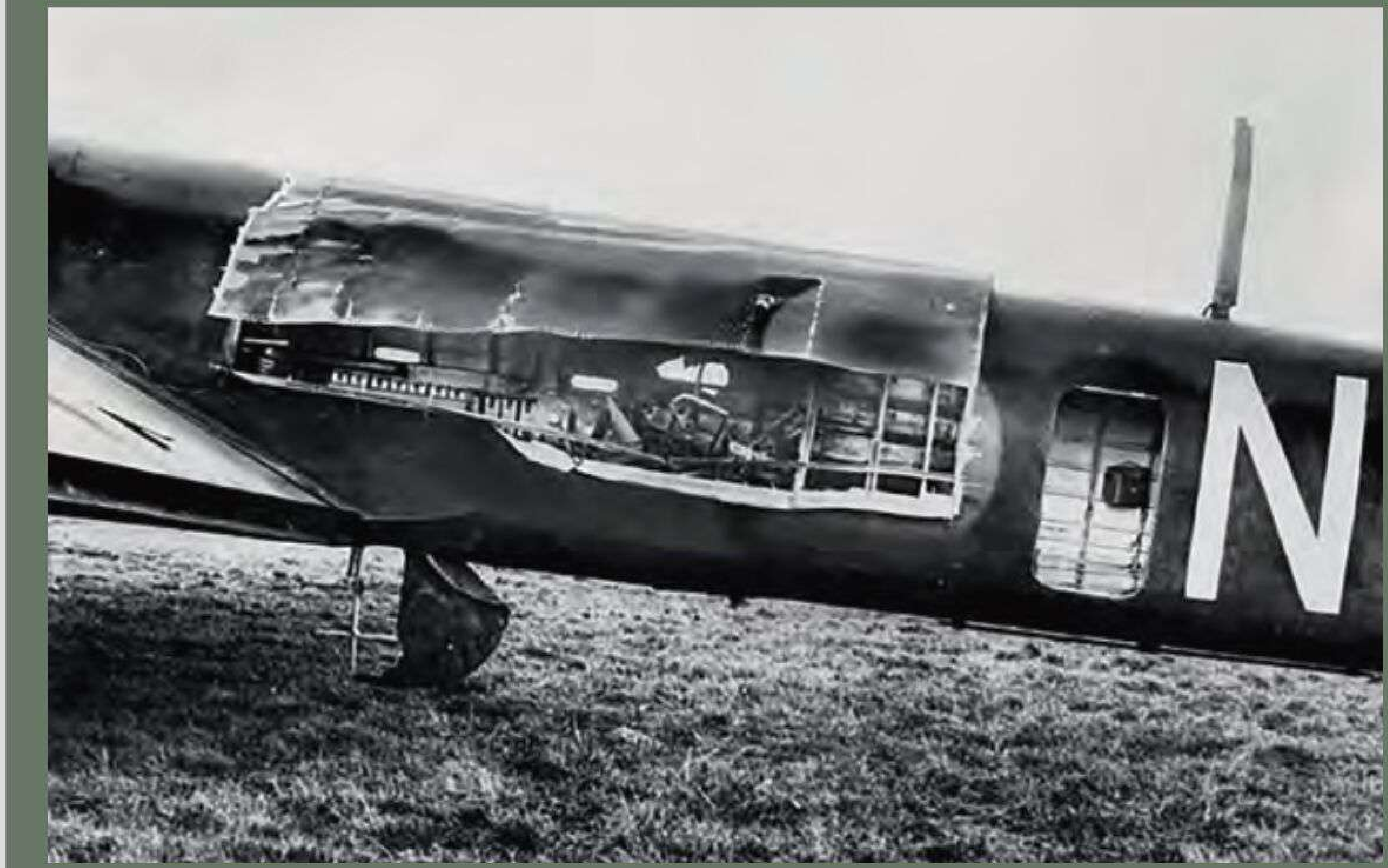
September 7, 1917 –July 31, 1992

Royal Air Force | Victoria Cross; Distinguished Service Order with two Bars; Order of Merit; Distinguished Flying Cross

ABOVE Gp Capt Leonard Cheshire flew RAF bombers during World War Two and become one of the most highly decorated airmen of the conflict. **Public Domain**

GRP CAPTAIN Geoffrey Leonard Cheshire was among the most highly decorated Allied fighting men of World War Two. His exploits were numerous, and his command capability set an example of heroism throughout the Royal Air Force.

He was recommended for the Victoria Cross after leading 617 Squadron in bombing raids against the railroad tunnel near the French town of Saumur three days after the D-Day landings of 1944, the German E-boat pens at Le Havre, and the launching sites for the V-2 rocket that threatened British cities that autumn. However, Cheshire is included in this section as an early hero of the RAF in World War Two, one who set the compass toward the true north of victory.



ABOVE This photo reveals the damage to Leonard Cheshire's Whitley bomber after the raid on the oil refinery and rail yard near Cologne on the night of November 12, 1940. **Public Domain**

During the early days of the war, Cheshire participated in some of the first air raids against Nazi war production facilities, hitting cities in Germany and occupied Europe. On the night of November 12, 1940, he piloted an Armstrong Whitworth Whitley twin-engine bomber during a raid on the oil refinery at Wesseling, near the city of Cologne. Cloud cover and heavy flak caused the mission to divert to a secondary target, a nearby rail yard. Although his bomber was heavily damaged by flak, Cheshire held course, delivered his payload, and then flew the bomber back to base during a five-hour ordeal – even as the plane was buffeted by an 80mph headwind. He received the first of three awards of the Distinguished Service Order (DSO) soon afterward.

During his second tour of duty, with 35 Squadron, Cheshire received the Distinguished Flying Cross and a bar to his DSO by mid-March 1941. By the following August, with the Allies yet to assume a comprehensive offensive posture against the Axis, Cheshire was leading 76 Squadron and flying the Handley Page Halifax bomber. He had received the second bar to his DSO and was then the most highly decorated pilot in RAF Bomber Command.

Cheshire survived the war to pursue a career largely devoted to charitable work.

CAPTAIN BERNARD WARBURTON-LEE

September 13, 1895 – April 10, 1940

Royal Navy | Victoria Cross; Norwegian War Cross

ONLY 23 awards of the Victoria Cross were made to Royal Navy personnel during World War Two, and 12 of these were posthumous. Captain Bernard Warburton-Lee was among those honoured after giving his life. The Allied campaign in Norway was to end in failure; however, there were moments of great heroism that set an example for the future and upheld the highest tradition of valorous conduct among the officers and sailors of the Royal Navy.

ABOVE Capt Bernard Warburton-Lee led the Royal Navy 2nd Destroyer Flotilla in action against the Germans at Narvik, Norway. **Public Domain**

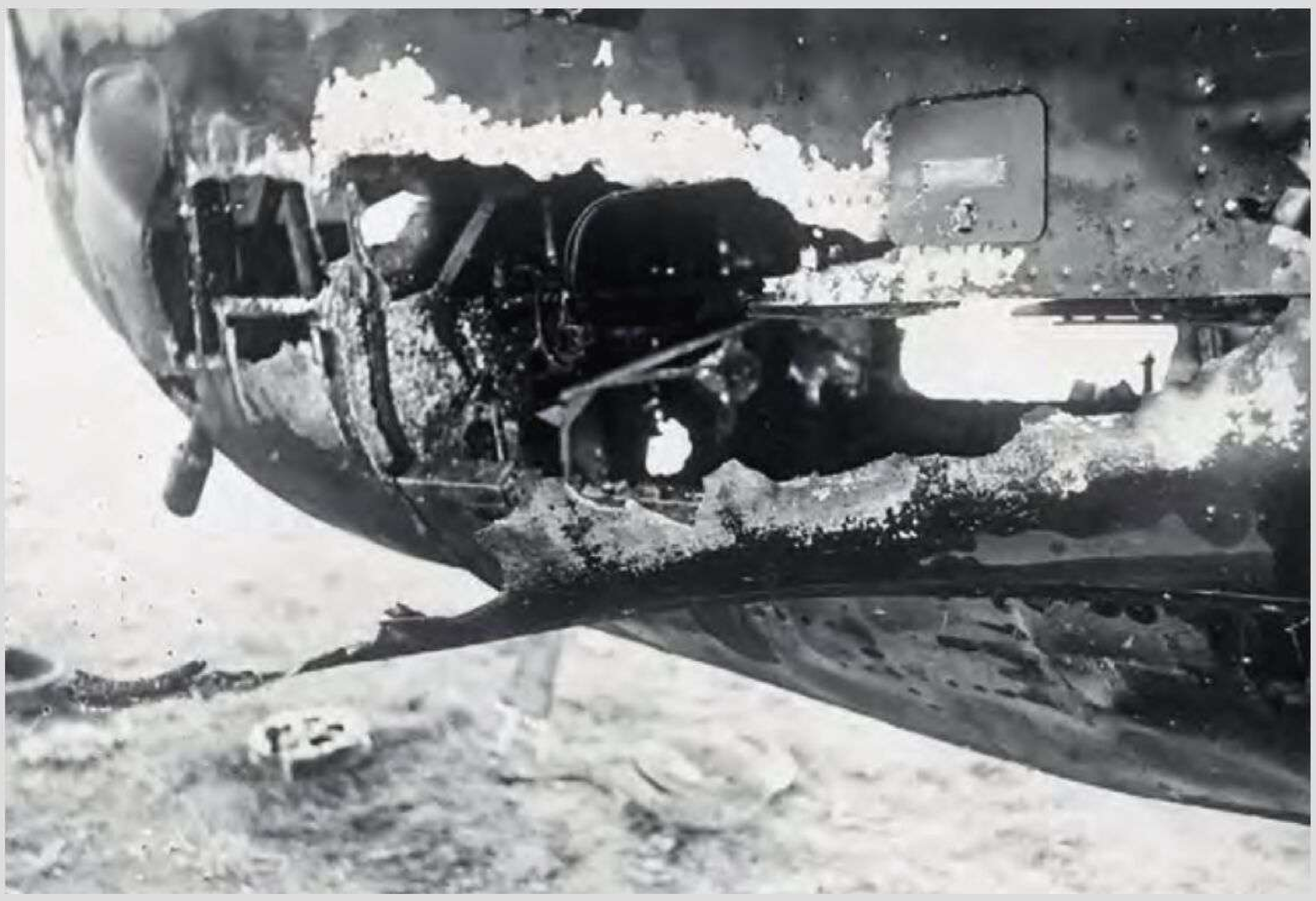
BELOW The wrecks of German warships and merchantmen dot the harbour at Narvik, Norway, after a series of naval engagements in 1940. **Public Domain**

Warburton-Lee was a navy man, and as was the custom, a selected naval officer would spend his final year of education with the British Army Staff College, Camberley. Warburton-Lee was a classmate of Lt Ge Brian Horrocks at Camberley, and Horrocks wrote, "…Our sailor turned out to be that remarkable all-rounder Warburton-Lee."

The port of Narvik, Norway, was the scene of violent battle between destroyers of the Royal Navy and the German Kriegsmarine, and Capt Warburton-Lee was one of those daring officers who pressed forward in the face of the enemy. On April 10, 1940, Warburton-Lee was in command of the 2nd Destroyer Flotilla at Ofotfjord. From the bridge of HMS *Hardy*, he directed his command to attack a German destroyer force.

Prior to executing the attack, he signalled the Admiralty that there were six enemy destroyers and a submarine in the harbour and that the entrance was probably mined. Undeterred, he proceeded. At dawn the following morning, the British destroyers advanced in a blinding snowstorm and took the Germans by surprise. Three successful attacks were completed against the enemy destroyers and merchant ships within the fjord. However, as the British ships began to withdraw, five heavier enemy destroyers appeared on the scene.

Hardy's bridge was struck by a German shell, and the captain mortally wounded. Full of fight to the last, he ordered, "Continue to engage the enemy." His was the first Victoria Cross of World War Two to be gazetted, June 7, 1940.



ABOVE The fire damage done to Hannah's plane above Antwerp is evident in this photo of the gunner's position where the sergeant was stationed. **Public Domain**

FLIGHT SERGEANT JOHN HANNAH

November 27, 1921 – June 7, 1947

Royal Air Force | Victoria Cross

FLIGHT SERGEANT John Hannah was a mere 18 years old when he displayed tremendous courage and earned the Victoria Cross in the skies above war-torn Europe. Hannah joined the Royal Air Force on August 15, 1939, just two weeks before the outbreak of World War Two and trained as a wireless operator. He was posted to 83 Squadron the following year and flew aboard Handley Page Hampden bombers during some of the earliest RAF raids of the war.

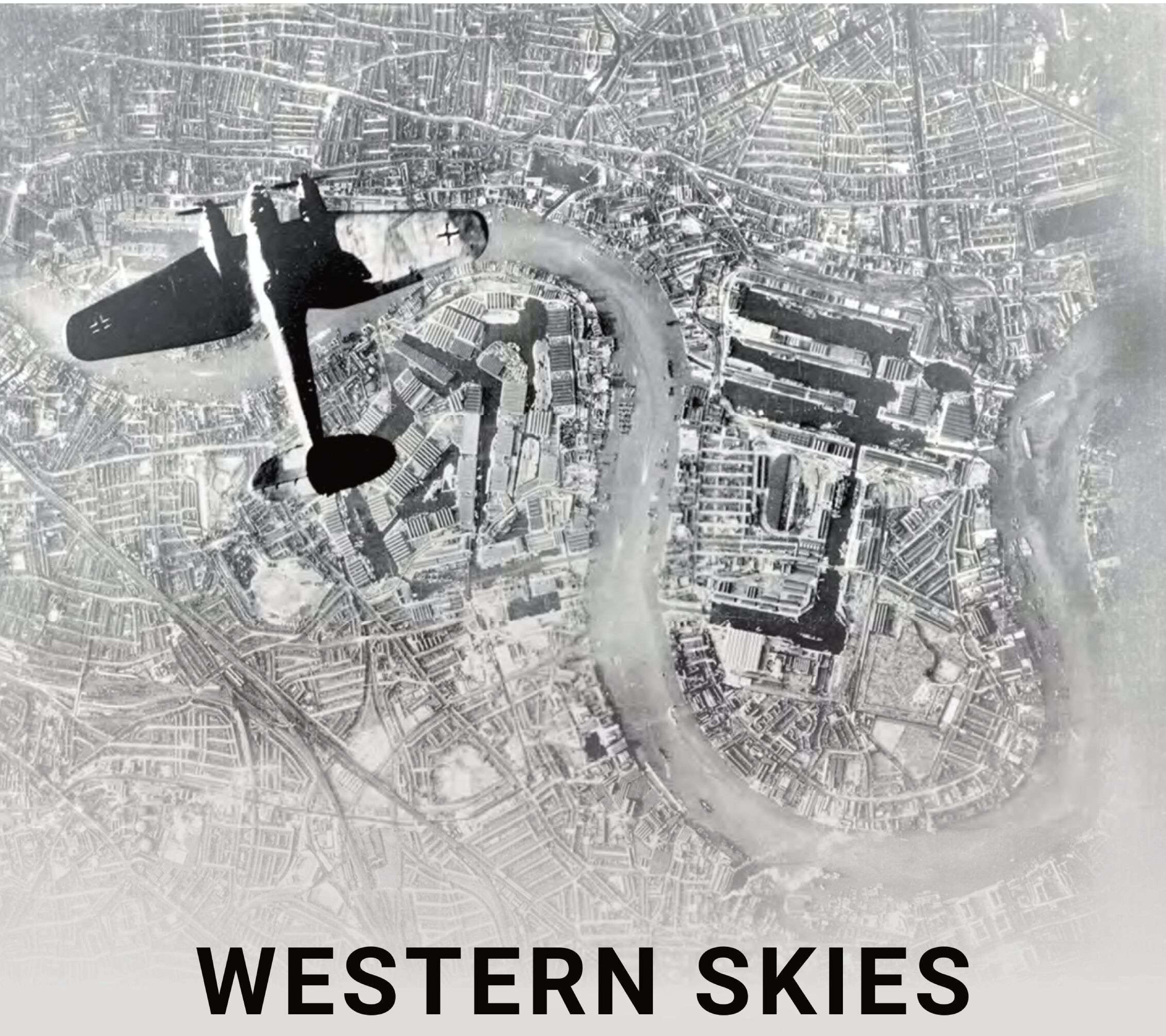
When he arrived at RAF Scampton to join 83 Squadron, the bombers were engaging in raids on ports along the coast of occupied Europe, and the Battle of Britain was nearing its critical conclusion. The targets of most bombing raids at that time were the barges and troop transports clustered in the harbours in preparation for *Operation Sea Lion*, the planned Nazi invasion of Great Britain.

ABOVE Sgt John Hannah was only 18 years old when he fought flames aboard an RAF bomber and earned the Victoria Cross. **Public Domain**

During one of these raids on the night of September 15, 1940, Hannah was aboard a Hampden serving as wireless operator and gunner. Flying above the port of Antwerp, Belgium, the bomber took heavy antiaircraft fire and began to burn. Preparations were made to bale out.

Although young, Hannah could have followed along. However, he chose to remain aboard the bomber and fight the growing fire, which began to set off ammunition. He battled the blaze with fire extinguishers for 10 minutes, and when these were exhausted, he beat back the flames with his log book. Crawling forward, he sustained burns to his face and eyes, but his effort succeeded in putting out the fire. The pilot also remained aboard and was able to bring the plane safely back to base.

A year after the incident, Hannah became ill with tuberculosis, his health compromised by the burns and inhalation of toxic fumes aboard the stricken bomber. He died in 1947 at the age of 25.



WESTERN SKIES

SEPTEMBER 1939 - MAY 1945

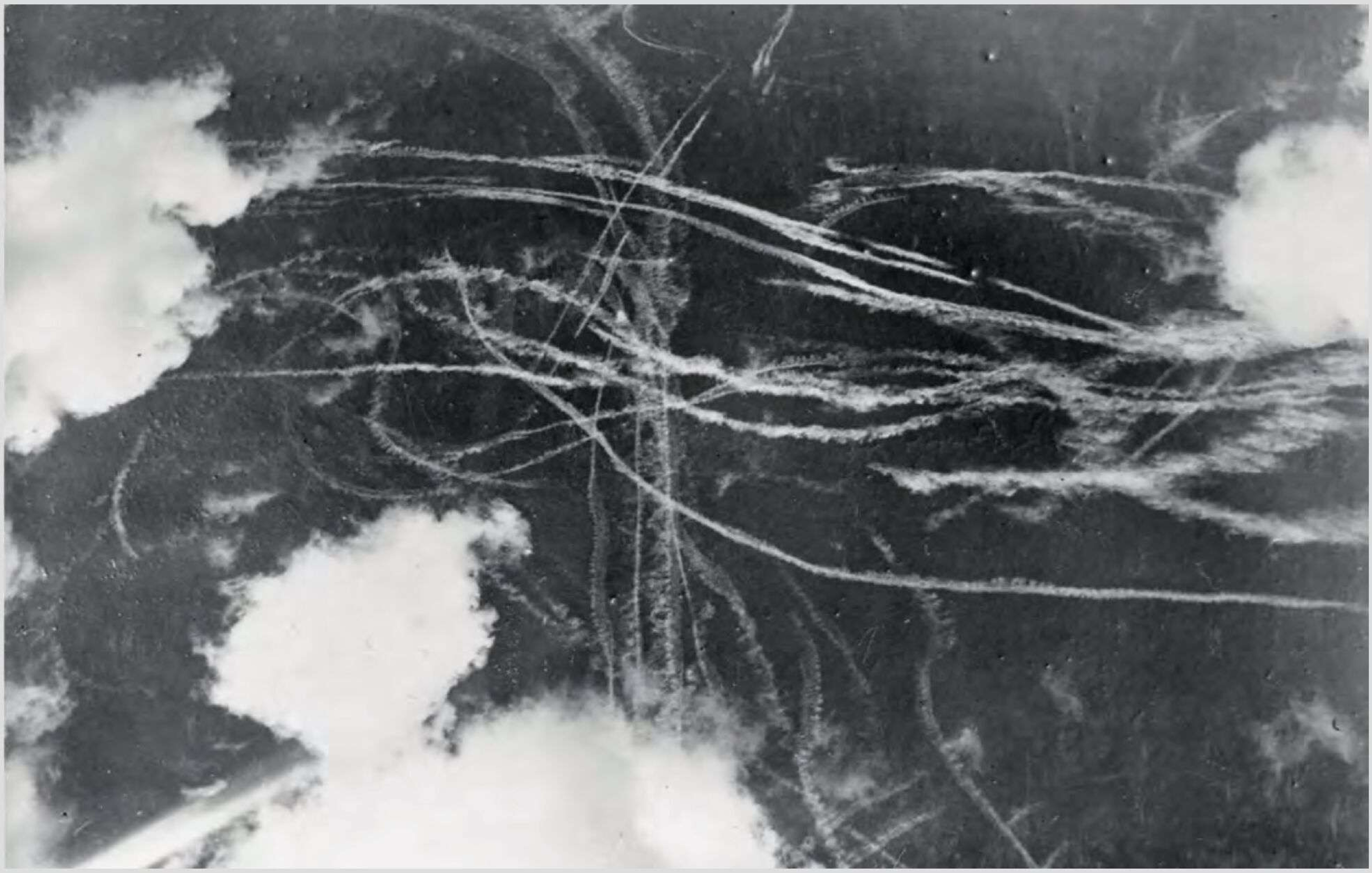
IN THE summer and autumn of 1940, the Western skies were the front lines of World War Two. Britain stood alone against the might of the Nazi war machine, and just weeks after the fall of France, the Battle of Britain was underway. The Royal Air Force bore the brunt of the Luftwaffe's epic aerial onslaught, and when it was over there were still dark days ahead, but Britain was safe from Nazi invasion.

Prime Minister Winston Churchill and senior officers of the RAF had seen the great test coming as the situation deteriorated in France, and a request from the French government for more fighter planes to combat the enemy tide on the continent was rejected. The British knew, painfully, that those fighters would be needed to defend their homeland.

In the event, On June 18, the Prime Minister rose to address the House of Commons with a warning. "Let us therefore brace ourselves to our duties," he intoned, "and so bear ourselves that if the British Empire and its Commonwealth last for a thousand years, men will still say, 'This was their finest hour.'"

And then, those fighters, the sleek Supermarine Spitfire, and the workhorse Hawker Hurricane, took to the skies. Their intrepid, young RAF pilots wrote a stirring chapter in the history of warfare, shooting down so many planes emblazoned with black crosses that the Nazi invasion of Britain, *Operation Sea Lion,* was shelved. British, Canadian, South African, French, Polish, Czech, and American pilots – members of the Eagle Squadrons that flew for the RAF before the United States entered World War Two – displayed incredible heroism and resolve.

Air Marshal Hugh Dowding, leading RAF Fighter Command from its beginning in 1936 through to November 1940, is to be credited with establishing Chain Home, the world's first operational early warning radar network. When German bomber formations were detected, the RAF airfields were alerted and their pilots given the advantage of precious time to take off, gain altitude, and select advantageous attack positions. At one airfield a bell was inscribed, 'Don't go and tell! Ring this like hell!'



ABOVE Vapor trails crisscross the skies as RAF and Luftwaffe planes lock in aerial combat during the 1940 Battle of Britain. **Public Domain**

Following the Battle of Britain, control of the Western skies remained a prerequisite for operations on land and sea. Soon, the RAF was joined by the US Army Air Forces, and the Eighth Air Force teamed with RAF Bomber and Fighter Command to conduct operations through the end of the war in Europe.

The bombers, at first capable of only small air raids against occupied Europe, did not waste time in making bombastic Luftwaffe chief Reichsmarschall Hermann Göring eat his words. During a speech in 1939, Göring told a gathering, "No enemy bomber can reach the Ruhr (the industrial heart of Germany). If one reaches the Ruhr, my name is not Göring. You can call me Meyer!" The surname "Meyer" was common in Germany, and the Reichsmarschall's remark was proven an idle boast.

RAF bombers did indeed punish the Ruhr. They also inflicted retribution for the horrid days of the Blitz against Britain with devastating attacks on German cities. AM Arthur 'Bomber' Harris, chief of Bomber Command, looked straight into a newsreel camera and declared that the Nazis had "…sown the wind. Now they shall reap the whirlwind."

The early raids, with relatively few planes in number, grew to the first 1,000-plane raid in the spring of 1942. As the Eighth Air Force came on line, the Americans joined in. The Americans bombed by day, and the British by night. German cities were devastated, and the destruction of Hamburg and Dresden became symbols of air power that shocked the civilized world.

The fighter pilots of the RAF and Eighth Air Force escorted bomber formations on raids into occupied Europe and took on the Luftwaffe's experienced aerial warriors. Dogfights swirled in the Western skies, and in a bloody war of attrition the Allies wrested control of the air from the Germans. Accounts of aerial bravery among the fighter pilots abound. With the introduction of 'drop tanks', fuel tanks that extended the range of escorting fighters, and the concurrent development of fighter aircraft that could reach the skies deep into the Third Reich, even Berlin felt the concussion of Allied bombs. The fighter pilots further executed tactical 'fighter sweeps' inviting the Luftwaffe into memorable, one-on-one aerial duels.

Tactical air support came of age during World War Two in the West, devastating enemy armour and troop concentrations to facilitate ground progress and prompting the Germans to restrict large movements to the cover of darkness. Then, there were the heroes of the troop carriers, piloting transports and gliders. By the autumn of 1944, when *Operation Market-Garden* was launched over the Netherlands, their overwhelming might was apparent to those on the ground. Successive waves of planes darkened the sky – harbingers of the final victory.

Heroism and sacrifice were never in short supply during World War Two in the Western skies. A few of the heroes, the lustre of their deeds undimmed in the decades that followed, are spotlighted here.

LEFT North American P-51 Mustang fighters of the US Eighth Air Force fly in formation in 1944. The high-performance Mustang gained fame in combat with the Luftwaffe in the Western skies. **Public Domain**

LEAD PICTURE A German Heinkel He-111 bomber flies over the Surrey commercial docks and the East End of London, during the Battle of Britain. **Public Domain**

GROUP CAPTAIN DOUGLAS BADER

February 21, 1910 – September 5, 1982

Royal Air Force | Knight Bachelor Order of the British Empire; Distinguished Service Order with bar; Distinguished Flying Cross with bar

ABOVE Squadron Leader Douglas Bader (centre) and two other pilots of 242 Squadron RAF admire the nose art on Bader's Hawker Hurricane fighter in October 1940.
Public Domain

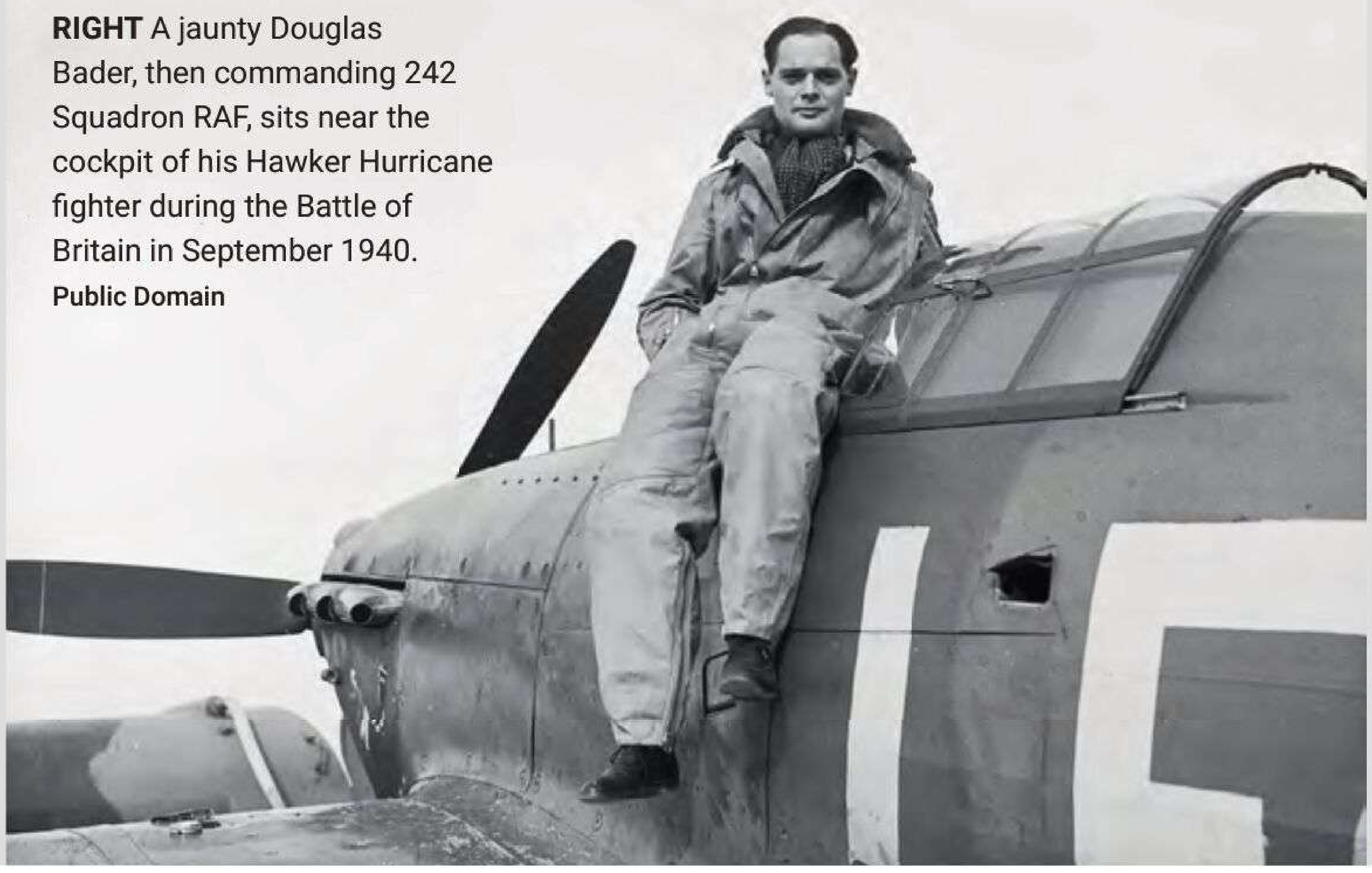
IN AUGUST 1941, Douglas Bader's fighter was on fire. He baled out and was captured by the Germans, and when he was taken prisoner there was no doubt that this RAF pilot was a well-known individual. Both his legs were missing –not from recent action, but from plane crash a decade earlier. Bader had narrowly escaped death in December 1931, learned to fly without his legs, but been retired by the RAF due to his disability.

When war broke out in 1939, every available pilot was needed, and Bader returned to the air as a fighter pilot. Before his shootdown and capture, Bader was credited with an impressive tally of 22 aerial victories against the Luftwaffe and six probable kills. He was known to have shared in the downing of four other German aircraft. He was also an advocate of the controversial Big Wing fighter tactic.

Bader's reputation as a crack fighter pilot had, of course, preceded him. When news of his capture reached the higher echelons of Luftwaffe command, Colonel Adolf Galland, a noted German fighter ace and later Luftwaffe general of fighters, visited his opponent. The two conversed, and Bader was invited to visit Galland's airfield, where he sat in the cockpit of the officer's Messerschmitt Me-109 fighter and asked if he could take a test flight. The negative response was followed with a round of laughter.

Galland got word to the British that Bader had lost a prosthetic leg as he parachuted to earth, and an RAF bomber received clearance to drop a replacement to the Germans for Bader's use. Bader was sent to the infamous Colditz Castle and, despite his disability, attempted to escape several times.

Bader retired in 1946 and generated some controversy for his post-war political views. He maintained a close friendship with Galland, spanning 40 years, and the German ace attended his funeral in 1982.



RIGHT A jaunty Douglas Bader, then commanding 242 Squadron RAF, sits near the cockpit of his Hawker Hurricane fighter during the Battle of Britain in September 1940.
Public Domain

WING COMMANDER ROBERT STANFORD TUCK

July 1, 1916 – May 5, 1987

Royal Air Force | Distinguished Service Order; Distinguished Flying Cross with two bars; Air Force Cross; US Distinguished Flying Cross

WHEN HE took off in his Supermarine Spitfire fighter from RAF Croydon on May 23, 1940, Flying Officer Robert Stanford Tuck was leading his first combat mission as a flight commander of 92 Squadron. He rapidly established himself as a capable pilot, shooting down three German fighters while battling the Luftwaffe in the midst of the evacuation of the British Expeditionary Force at Dunkirk.

A day later, London-born Tuck became an ace, with his fourth and fifth aerial victories against German bombers. His score mounted rapidly as the Battle of Britain commenced, and on June 18, he shot down a German Junkers Ju-88 bomber, damaging another. However, his Spitfire was damaged by return fire, and he was forced to bale out. Another near catastrophe occurred in August when he downed a Dornier Do-17 bomber but had his Spitfire shot up so badly that the engine gave out over the English Channel. Stanford Tuck glided safely back to England and made a hard landing.

In September 1940, Stanford Tuck was given command of 257 Squadron, flying Hawker Hurricane fighters from RAF Coltishall. During that decisive month, He scored well, including a possible victory over future Luftwaffe ace Hans Joachim Marseille, although records are unclear. He survived being shot down again in June 1941 and was pulled from the Channel by sailors aboard a coal barge.

ABOVE Robert Stanford Tuck is shown in the cockpit of a Hawker Hurricane fighter while in command of 257 Squadron RAF. **Public Domain**

ABOVE Ground crewmen at RAF Hornchurch pass the time waiting for fighter pilots to return from a mission. Robert Stanford Tuck commanded fighters based at Hornchurch. **Public Domain**

A month later, Stanford Tuck was promoted to acting wing leader at RAF Duxford, leading numerous fighter sweeps to draw the Luftwaffe into aerial combat or strafe targets of opportunity. After a trip to the United States to evaluate potential Lend-Lease aircraft that might be sent to Britain, he returned to action as wing leader at RAF Biggin Hill. His Spitfire was shot down during a fighter sweep on January 28, 1942, and Stanford Tuck was taken prisoner. At the time, his score stood at 29 kills; he had survived being shot down four times. He escaped captivity in February 1945 and joined Russian forces briefly as they fought toward Berlin.

Retired from the RAF in 1949, Stanford Tuck flew the English Electric Canberra medium bomber, a first-generation jet aircraft, as a test pilot. He was a close friend of German ace Adolf Galland and godfather to Galland's son born in 1966.

WING COMMANDER GUY GIBSON

August 12, 1918 – September 19, 1944

Royal Air Force | Victoria Cross; Distinguished Service Order and bar; Distinguished Flying Cross and bar; US Commander of the Legion of Merit

ABOVE Wing Commander Guy Gibson led the Avro Lancaster bombers of 617 Squadron that conducted the Dambusters raid. **Public Domain**

ONE OF the most daring and courageous missions in the history of the RAF occurred on May 16-17, 1943. *Operation Chastise* was a strike at the series of dams that held floodwaters back in the Ruhr Valley of Germany. Breaching the dams might release the waters and devastate the concentration of industry in the Ruhr, the industrial heart of Germany. The raid succeeded in destroying two hydroelectric stations and the Möhne and Eder dams were breached.

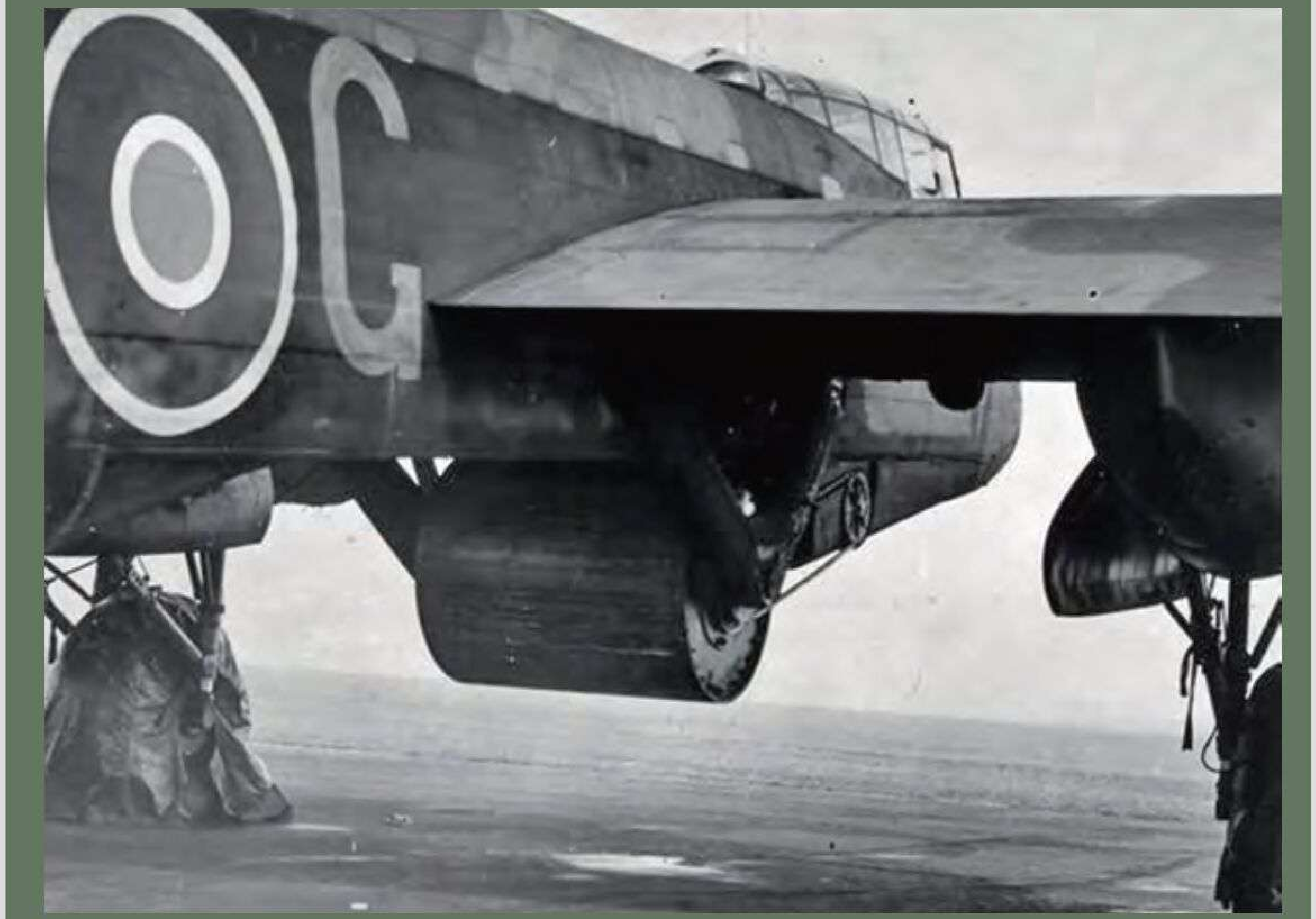
Wing Commander Guy Gibson was already a highly decorated combat veteran of numerous bombing missions against targets in Germany and Nazi-occupied Europe when the opportunity to lead the mission was presented. Summoned by Air Vice Marshal Ralph Cochrane, Air Officer Commanding 5 Group, Gibson remembered the conversation in which he was offered tactical command of *Operation Chastise*.

"In one breath he congratulated me on my bar to the DSO, in the next he suddenly said, 'How would you like to do one more trip?' I gulped. More flak, more fighters, but said aloud, 'What kind of trip, sir?'

'A pretty important one, perhaps one of the most devastating of all time. I can't tell you more now. Do you want to do it?' I said I thought I did, trying to remember where I left my flying kit.'"

Gibson did agree to take command and recruited the crews that would participate in what came to be known as the Dambusters raid. Nineteen Avro Lancaster bombers took part in the nocturnal raid; eight were lost and 53 airmen killed. However, the planners deemed the mission successful, and 617 Squadron gained lasting fame. Soon after the raid, the time came to choose an appropriate badge. King George VI chose a design that included the motto, "Apres moi le deluge," or "After me the flood."

Gibson received the Victoria Cross; however, he was tragically killed when his plane crashed during a mission over the Netherlands in 1944. He was only 26 years old when he died.



ABOVE The specially designed bouncing bomb, code named Upkeep, used during the Dambusters raid was suspended below the fuselage of the Avro Lancaster bomber. **Public Domain**

ABOVE Captain Don Gentile sits on the wing of his North American P-51 Mustang fighter. Gentile flew with the RAF Eagle Squadrons early in World War Two. Public Domain

MAJOR DON GENTILE

December 6, 1920 – January 28, 1951

US Army Air Forces | Distinguished Service Cross; Distinguished Flying Cross; Silver Star; Air Medal

GENERAL DWIGHT D. EISENHOWER, supreme commander of Allied forces in Europe, called Don Gentile a "One man air force."

Gentile was one of several American fighter pilots who could claim to have eclipsed the kill tally of the legendary Captain Eddie Rickenbacker in World War One. Including two kills while serving with the RAF before transferring to the USAAF, Gentile totalled 29.88 victories, six of them destroyed on the ground. Hence, a bit of a controversy ensued as to whether only aerial victories should be counted in an ace's total.

No matter. All who flew with him acknowledged Don Gentile as an expert pilot, deadly in the skies over Europe. Gentile was the son of Italian immigrants and grew up in Ohio. A fascination with flying led his father to buy Don an Aerosport biplane when he was a young man. Although he had 300 hours of pilot time when he tried to join the US Army Air Forces (USAAF) in July 1941, the army required two years of college. Gentile did not qualify and joined the Royal Air Force instead.

Gentile was posted to 133 Squadron in England, flying the Supermarine Spitfire fighter. He was one of numerous American pilots who flew with the three Eagle Squadrons of the RAF, and recorded two kills, an Fw-190 fighter and Ju-88 bomber, on August 19, 1942, while supporting the Dieppe raid.

When the Eagle Squadrons transferred to the USAAF in September 1942, Gentile joined the 4th Fighter Group. Adjusting to the heavy Republic P-47 Thunderbolt fighter from the sleek Spitfire was a challenge, but Gentile found success anyway. In February 1944, the group transitioned to the North American P-51 Mustang, and its performance was well suited to those who had loved the Spitfire. Gentile gained the attention of the press while flying his P-51, nicknamed Shangri La, but he was grounded after crash landing while stunt flying for reporters at RAF Debden.

Gentile was sent to the United States on a war bond tour in mid-1944 and not permitted to re-join the 4th Fighter Group. He finished the war at Wright Field, Ohio, and co-wrote his autobiography *One Man Air Force* with war correspondent Ira Wolfert.

On January 23, 1951, Gentile was killed in the crash of a T-33 jet trainer at Andrews Air Force Base, Maryland. He was 30 years old.

LEFT General Dwight D. Eisenhower presents the Distinguished Service Cross to Captain Don Gentile while 4th Fighter Group commander Colonel Don Blakeslee looks on at right. Gentile was posthumously promoted to the rank of major. Public Domain

WING COMMANDER JAMES 'JOHNNIE' JOHNSON

March 9, 1915 – January 30, 2001

Royal Air Force

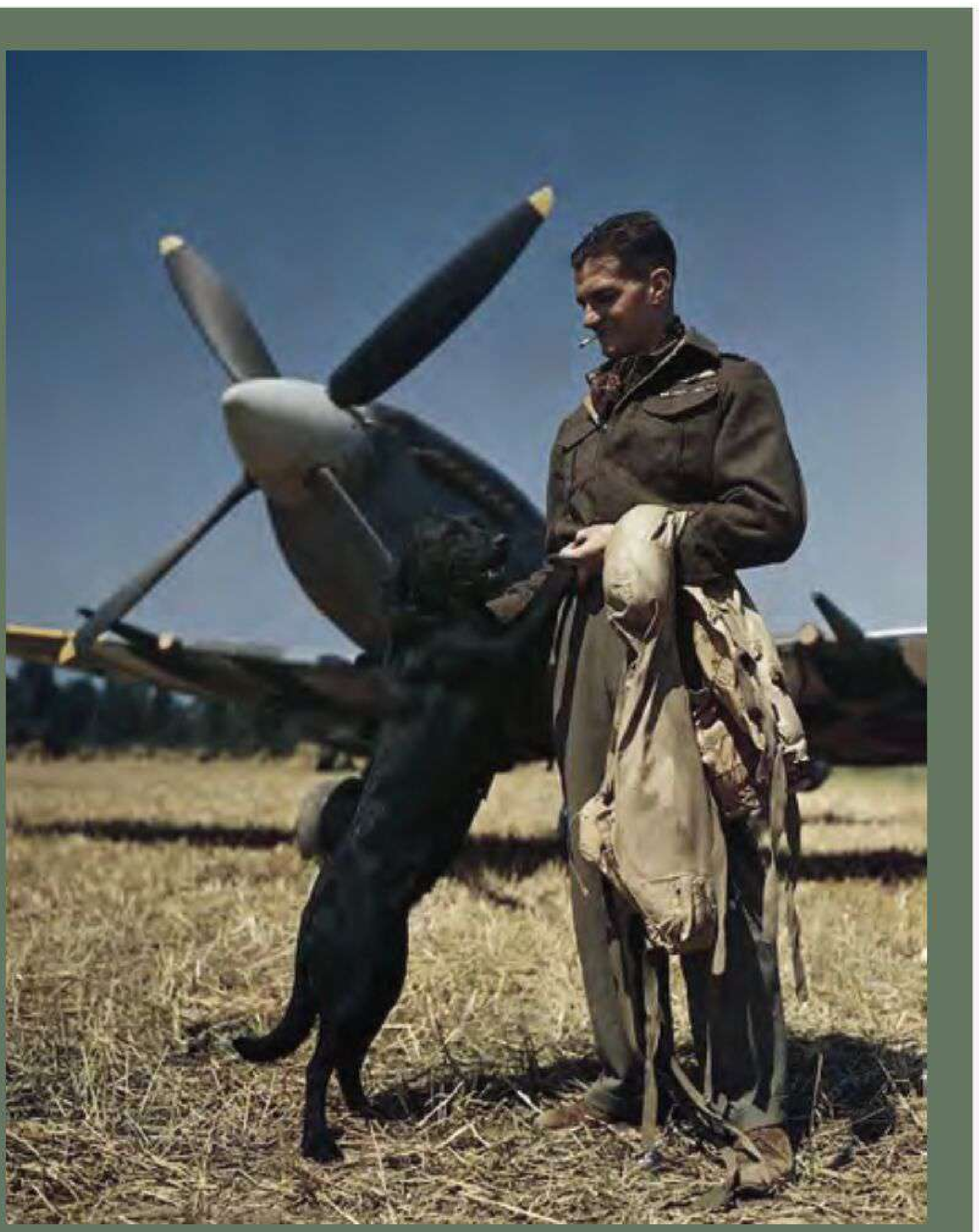
COMPANION OF the Order of the Bath; Commander of the Order of the British Empire; Distinguished Service Order with two bars; Distinguished Flying Cross with bar; Belgian Officer of the Order of Leopold; Belgian Croix de Guerre; US Legion of Merit; US Distinguished Flying Cross; US Air Medal; French Legion of Honor

Wing Commander Johnnie Johnson was the highest scoring Royal Air Force ace of World War Two with 34 confirmed victories, as well as the highest scoring ace of the Western Allies, and perhaps the most proficient pilot of the legendary Supermarine Spitfire. However, just getting into the RAF was a struggle.

Johnson was accepted by the Royal Air Force Volunteer Reserve (RAFVR) in August 1939, after being rejected by the Auxiliary Air Force (AAF) and by the RAFVR on his initial application. There may have been some social class bias related to his background that influenced the AAF decision, and there is no doubt that a broken collarbone suffered while playing rugby in 1938 had a bearing on the RAFVR admission. The broken bone was not set properly and later required surgery, side-lining Johnson in the summer of 1940 during the Battle of Britain.

Nevertheless, he qualified as a Spitfire pilot and scored his first aerial victory on June 26, 1941, downing a Messerschmitt Me-109. During the course of the war, he shot down 14 Me-109s and 20 Focke Wulf Fw-190 fighters, each of the victories against formidable aircraft types of the Luftwaffe. He was frequently engaged in hazardous fighter sweeps over the continent but was never shot down.

BELOW In this grainy gun camera footage, a German Focke Wulf Fw-190 fighter falls to the guns of Johnnie Johnson. The kill, Johnson's 19th, was recorded on August 23, 1943. Public Domain



ABOVE Johnnie Johnson poses with his Labrador Retriever, Sally, at Bazenville, Normandy, in 1944. Johnson was the highest scoring RAF ace of World War Two. **Public Domain**

In July 1942, Johnson was given command of 610 Squadron, and he later rose to wing command. He scored his 10th kill in the spring of 1943 and shot down five Fw-190s in the month of June. In July, he destroyed three Me-109s, raising his score to 18. On April 25, 1944, he scored his 23rd aerial victory and became the top RAF ace still flying actively. Shortly after the D-Day invasion, Johnson was flying from an airfield on French soil. On September 27, 1944, he claimed his last German fighter, shooting down an Me-109 over the Dutch town of Nijmegen while supporting *Operation Market-Garden*.

After the war, Johnson received a permanent RAF commission. He flew jet fighters via an exchange program with the US Air Force during the Korean War and retired from the RAF in 1965 with the rank of air vice marshal.

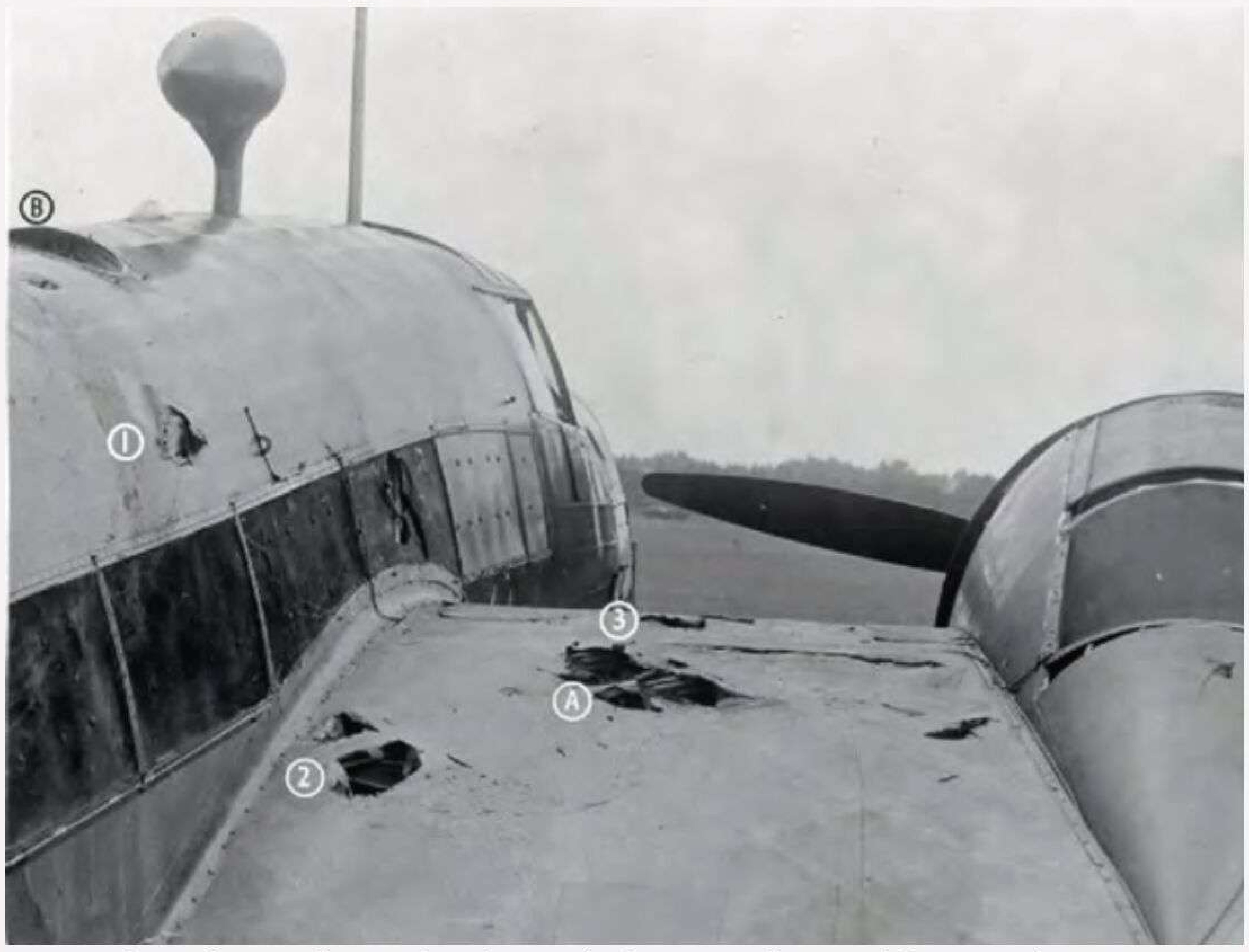
SERGEANT PILOT JAMES WARD

June 14, 1919 – September 15, 1941

Royal New Zealand Air Force | Victoria Cross

SERGEANT PILOT James Ward was a wing walker, although he had not really intended to be one. On the night of July 7, 1941, Ward was serving as the second pilot of a Vickers Wellington bomber. While returning to base from a mission over the German city of Munster, the bomber was attacked by a Luftwaffe Messerschmitt Me-110 night fighter and sustained serious damage from cannon and machine-gun hits.

ABOVE Pilot James Allen Ward stands in the cockpit of a Vickers Wellington bomber. Ward, a New Zealander, received the Victoria Cross. **Public Domain**



ABOVE The Vickers Wellington bomber in which James Allen Ward flew on July 7, 1941, displays battle damage. Ward climbed onto the wing to extinguish a fire. **Public Domain**

The Wellington's starboard engine was afire from a severed fuel line, and the flames quickly spread to the wing fabric, threatening to engulf the entire structure. The crew attempted to douse the flames by throwing coffee from their flasks and exhausted the fire extinguishers on board to no avail. As time appeared to be running out, Ward then suggested taking an engine cover that had been inside the aircraft being used as a seat cushion to smother the growing fire. At first, he was determined not to wear his parachute, but others persuaded him to do so. With a rope from the aircraft dinghy tied to him, Ward climbed out of the astrodome and down to the wing, punching holes in the fabric to gain adequate footing.

After successfully smothering the fire with the engine cover, Ward attempted to stuff the cover into the hole in the wing fabric. However, the terrific slipstream blew the cover away. Moments later, the fire burned itself out. There was no danger of flame spreading from the leaking fuel line since there was no fabric left to feed it. The Wellington returned safely to base.

For his heroism, Ward became the first of three airmen from New Zealand to receive the Victoria Cross during the course of World War Two. His citation was published in the August 5, 1941, edition of *The London Gazette*. Tragically, two months later he was shot down and killed while piloting a Wellington over Germany.

FLIGHT LIEUTENANT ALAN DEERE

December 12, 1917 – September 21, 1995

Royal Air Force | Order of the British Empire; Distinguished Service Order; Distinguished Flying Cross with bar; Croix de Guerre; US Distinguished Flying Cross

ABOVE New Zealander Alan Deere escaped several brushes with death as a Spitfire pilot and ended World War Two with 22 aerial victories. **Public Domain**

"BULLETS SEEMED to come from everywhere and pieces flew off my aircraft. Never did it take so long to cross the Channel. Then my Spitfire burst into flames, so I undid my straps and eased the stick back to gain height before baling out…Although I twisted and turned I could not free myself…Then suddenly I was blown along the side of the fuselage and was clear. A hurried snatch at the rip cord and, with a jolt, the parachute opened."

So wrote Flight Lieutenant (later air commodore) Alan Deere, a New Zealander who had joined the Royal Air Force in 1937 and ended World War Two as that country's second-highest scoring fighter pilot with 22 confirmed kills and 10 probables. Only Group Captain Colin Gray exceeded Deere's tally with 27 aerial victories.

Deere's account of the action in the summer of 1940 was one of several brushes with death he experienced during the war. In May 1940, he had flown fighter missions over the beaches of Dunkirk as the great evacuation was underway. In a single week, he shot down six German planes, but he was, in turn, shot down by a Luftwaffe pilot. After a 19-hour ordeal, including a boat ride from the English Channel back to England, he returned to base.

On July 9, 1940, Deere again cheated death when attacking enemy aircraft. After sending a German Messerschmitt Me-109 fighter spiralling down in flames, Deere was attacked head-on by another German. Neither would veer away, and in the ensuing game of chicken the German collided with Deere's Spitfire. Deere crashed into a cornfield and walked away with only minor injuries.

In January 1942, Deere visited the United States and taught fighter tactics to American pilots. He returned to action that spring, leading a Canadian fighter squadron and later serving as wing leader at RAF Biggin Hill. During the following six months, he flew 121 sorties, including fighter coverage of the D-Day landings and commanded the Free French fighter wing through the liberation of France. He died in 1995, and his ashes were scattered from a Spitfire above the River Thames.

ABOVE King George VI presents the Distinguished Flying Cross to Flight Lieutenant Alan Deere at Hornchurch, Essex. **Public Domain**

COLONEL FRANCIS "GABBY" GABRESKI

January 28, 1919 – January 31, 2002

US Army Air Forces | Distinguished Service Cross; Distinguished Service Medal; Silver Star; Legion of Merit; Distinguished Flying Cross; Bronze Star

HE WAS an experienced fighter pilot, an ace in fact, but in his exuberance to strafe German ground targets, he flew too low. On July 20, 1944, Francis 'Gabby' Gabreski had packed his bags to return to the US, but he could not resist just one more mission.

ABOVE Francis 'Gabby' Gabreski was a prolific scorer as a fighter pilot flying the Republic P-47 Thunderbolt. He also became a jet ace during the Korean War. **Public Domain**

CAPTAIN JEAN ACCART

April 7, 1912 – August 19, 1992

French Air Force | Legion of Honor; Croix de Guerre; Air Medal

WHEN THE Nazi war machine invaded France and the Low Countries on May 10, 1940, the French armed forces reeled. However, French fighting men did respond with courage on the ground and in the air.

Captain Jean Accart was aloft on May 10 and encountered a large number of Luftwaffe planes. Flying his Curtiss 75 Hawk fighter, Accart shot down four Dornier Do-17 bombers, two over Dun-sur-Meuse, a third over Minacourt, and another above Suippes.

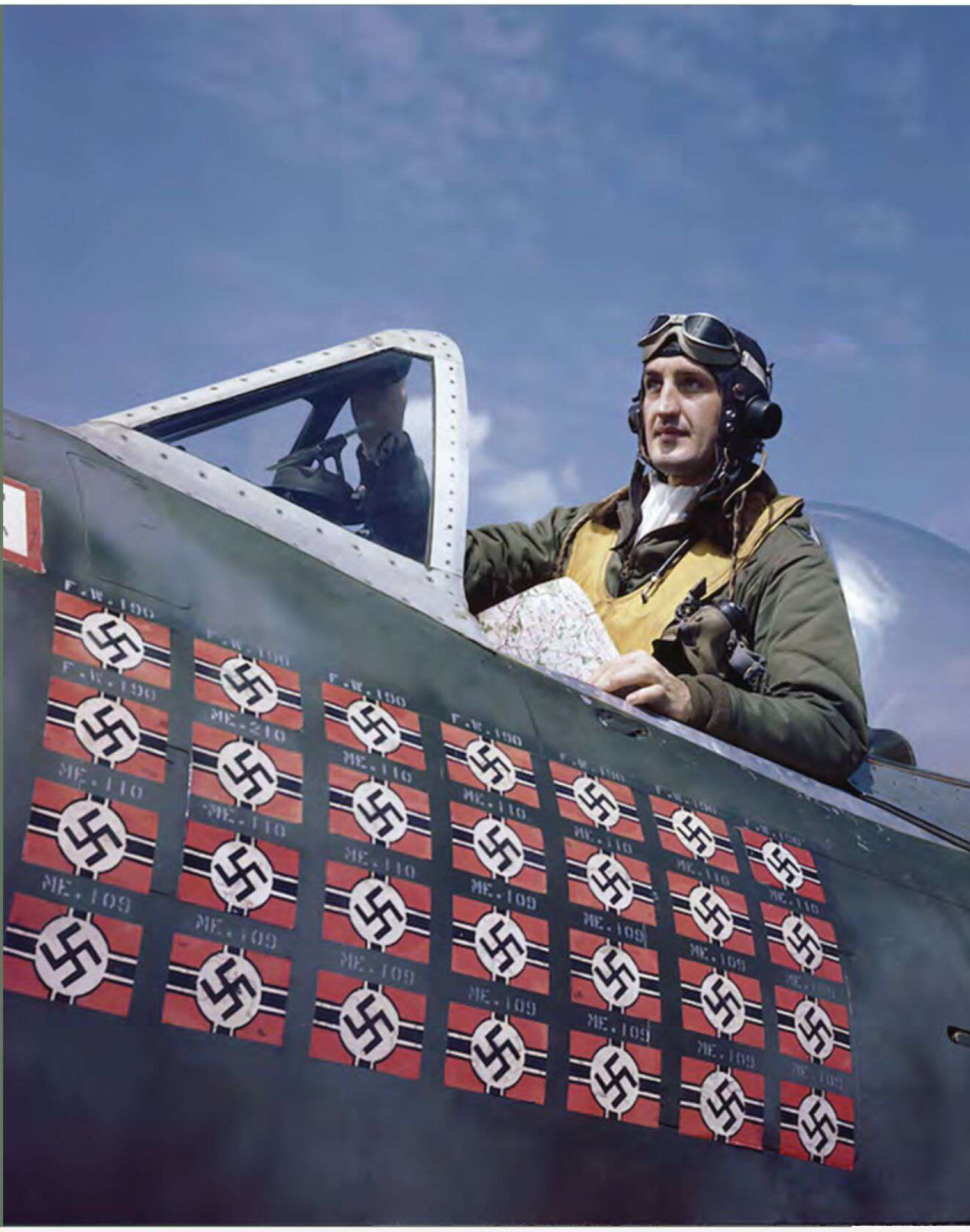
Commanding SPA 67, the first squadron of Fighter Group I/5 based at Suippes, Accart continued his raise his tally during the first week of the renewed war in the west. On May 11, he downed two Heinkel He-111 bombers above Souilly and Saint-Mihiel. Seven days later, he destroyed three more Heinkel bombers. This success was followed on May 26 with the downing of two

Flying a P-47 Thunderbolt fighter, Gabreski shot up a German Heinkel He-111 bomber parked at an airfield at Bassenheim. He came around for another pass, but his prop scraped the ground, disabling the aircraft and forcing him to crash land. For the next five days, Gabreski, whose skills as a fighter pilot were well known with 28 victories in the skies above Europe, managed to evade capture. When he was finally caught and taken before a German intelligence officer for interrogation, the German smiled and said, "Hello Gabby! We've been waiting for you a long time." Gabreski spent the rest of the war in a POW camp.

Prior to his mishap, Gabreski had completed numerous fighter missions with multiple kills. Gabreski was a rival of fellow ace Robert S. Johnson, and both flew with the 56th Fighter Group under the command of Colonel Hubert Zemke. The 56th became known as Zemke's 'Wolf Pack'.

Commanding the 61st Squadron, 56th Fighter Group on May 22, 1944 Gabreski shot down three Focke-Wulf Fw-190 fighters and on July 5, he became the leading American ace in the European Theatre with his 28th kill. He flew 166 combat missions during World War Two.

Gabreski remained in the US Air Force after World War Two and became one of only a few fighter pilots to achieve ace status in two wars. After flying the propeller-driven P-47 in World War Two, he transitioned to the F-86 Sabre jet fighter during the Korean War. He was credited with 6.5 aerial victories in Korea and ended with a lifetime tally of 34.5 kills. He retired from the Air Force in 1967 after more than 5,000 hours of flying and command of numerous squadrons and fighter wings during a 26-year career.



RIGHT Fighter ace Francis 'Gabby' Gabreski sits in the cockpit of his P-47 Thunderbolt. The swastikas emblazoned on the fighter's fuselage denote his aerial victories. **Public Domain**

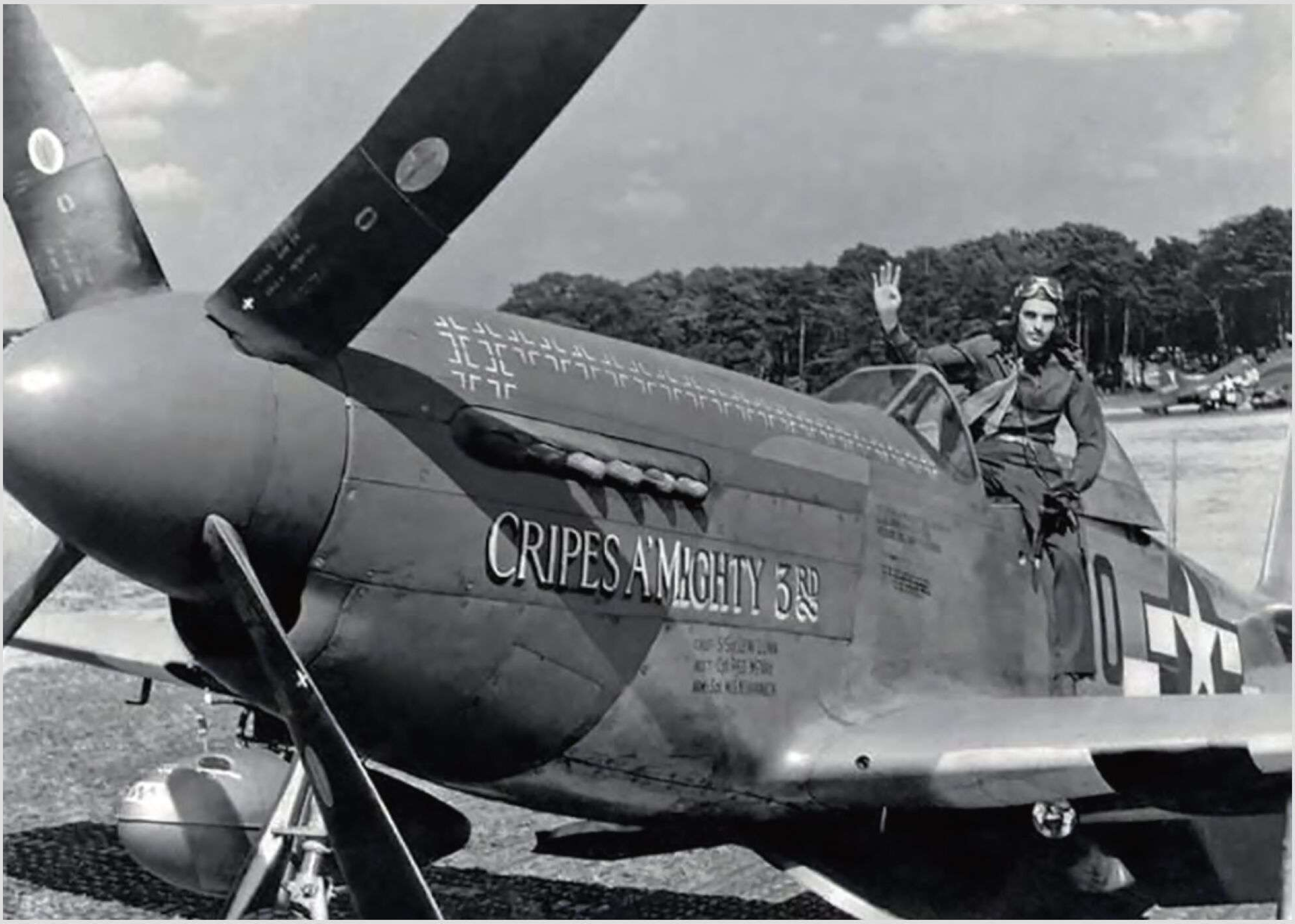
LEFT Curtiss 75 Hawk fighters of the Royal Air Force and the French Air Force fly in formation. The Hawk was a frontline aircraft of the French forces early in World War Two. **Public Domain**

LEFT Free French Air Force personnel receive Curtiss P-40 fighters at Casablanca in 1943. Jean Accart commanded a Free French fighter group. **Public Domain**

additional Heinkels. His final success took place on June 1, 1940, shooting down another He-111 aircraft for his 12th aerial victory. He was also credited with four probable kills.

In the June encounter, however, the intrepid Captain Accart nearly lost his life. The rear gunner of the doomed Heinkel managed to fire a burst from his machine gun, damaging the Hawk and wounding the French ace in the head. Accart managed to bale out as the fighter plunged earthward and barely got his parachute open before losing consciousness. Suffering a broken leg and other injuries upon landing, he was treated in a hospital in Lyon but refused to have the bullet removed from his head, fearing that he would lose his sight.

During his recovery, Accart drafted the book *Hunter in the Sky*, describing his adventures in aerial combat. He was subsequently posted to administrative duties in the southern air defence region and released from Vichy military service in November 1942. He travelled to North Africa via Spain in early 1944 and joined the Free French forces, commanding a fighter group. Accart remained with the French Air Force after the war and retired in 1965 with the rank of lieutenant general.



MAJOR GEORGE E. PREDDY

February 5, 1919 – December 25, 1944

US Army Air Forces | Distinguished Service Cross; Silver Star; Distinguished Flying Cross; Purple Heart; Air Medal

MAJOR GEORGE E. Preddy was one of a few fighter pilots to experience aerial combat in both the Pacific and European theatres during World War Two. From North Carolina, he was 22 years old when he completed flight training on December 12, 1941. He was ordered to join the 9th Pursuit Squadron in Australia and damaged two Japanese aircraft before a mid-air accident nearly ended his career.

After several months in the hospital, Preddy was reassigned to the 487th Fighter Squadron, 352nd Fighter Group at RAF Bodney. Flying the P-47 Thunderbolt fighter, he gained his first kill, flaming a German Messerschmitt Me-109 fighter on December 1, 1943. He received the Silver Star for shooting down an Me-210 fighter and saving a crippled Consolidated B-24 Liberator bomber that had been under attack by luring other enemy fighters away from the area.

In the spring of 1944, the 352nd Fighter Group transitioned from the P-47 to the North American P-51 Mustang, a high-performance aircraft that married an American airframe with the powerful British Rolls-Royce Merlin engine. Flying his P-51 nicknamed *Cripes A' Mighty*, Preddy became a prolific scorer and the leading active ace in the European theatre. On July 18, he shot down four German aircraft in a single mission. During an early August sortie, he shot down three Me-109s in rapid succession. Moments later, he had flamed two more after following them down to an altitude of just 5,000 feet. Before the engagement was over, he had scored his sixth kill of the day.

On Christmas Day, 1944, Preddy was in the air again, leading a patrol of 10 Mustangs that was vectored toward a formation of enemy fighters. Quickly, Preddy shot down two ME-109s. He then spotted a nimble Focke Wulf Fw-190 flying at treetop altitude and roared in to attack. Then, tragedy struck as American .50 calibre anti-aircraft batteries opened up. Preddy was struck by friendly fire and killed. At the time of his death, he had scored 26.83 aerial victories. He was the top P-51 Mustang ace of World War Two.

ABOVE Major George Preddy was the top P-51 Mustang fighter ace of World War Two. He was killed by friendly fire on December 25, 1944. **Public Domain**

TOP Major George Preddy waves from the cockpit of his P-51 Mustang. Note the black crosses on his aircraft's engine cowling, signifying aerial victories. **Public Domain**

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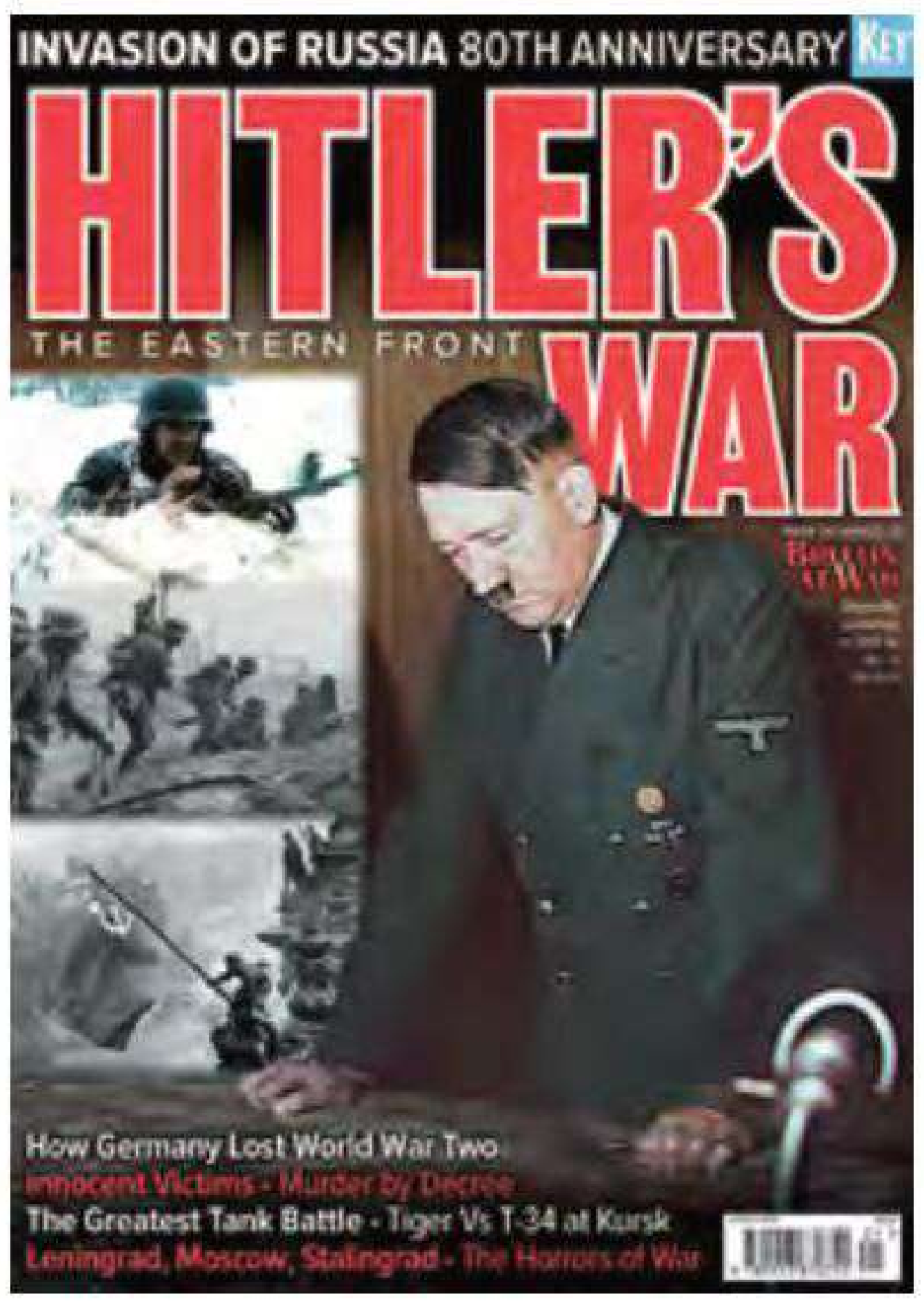
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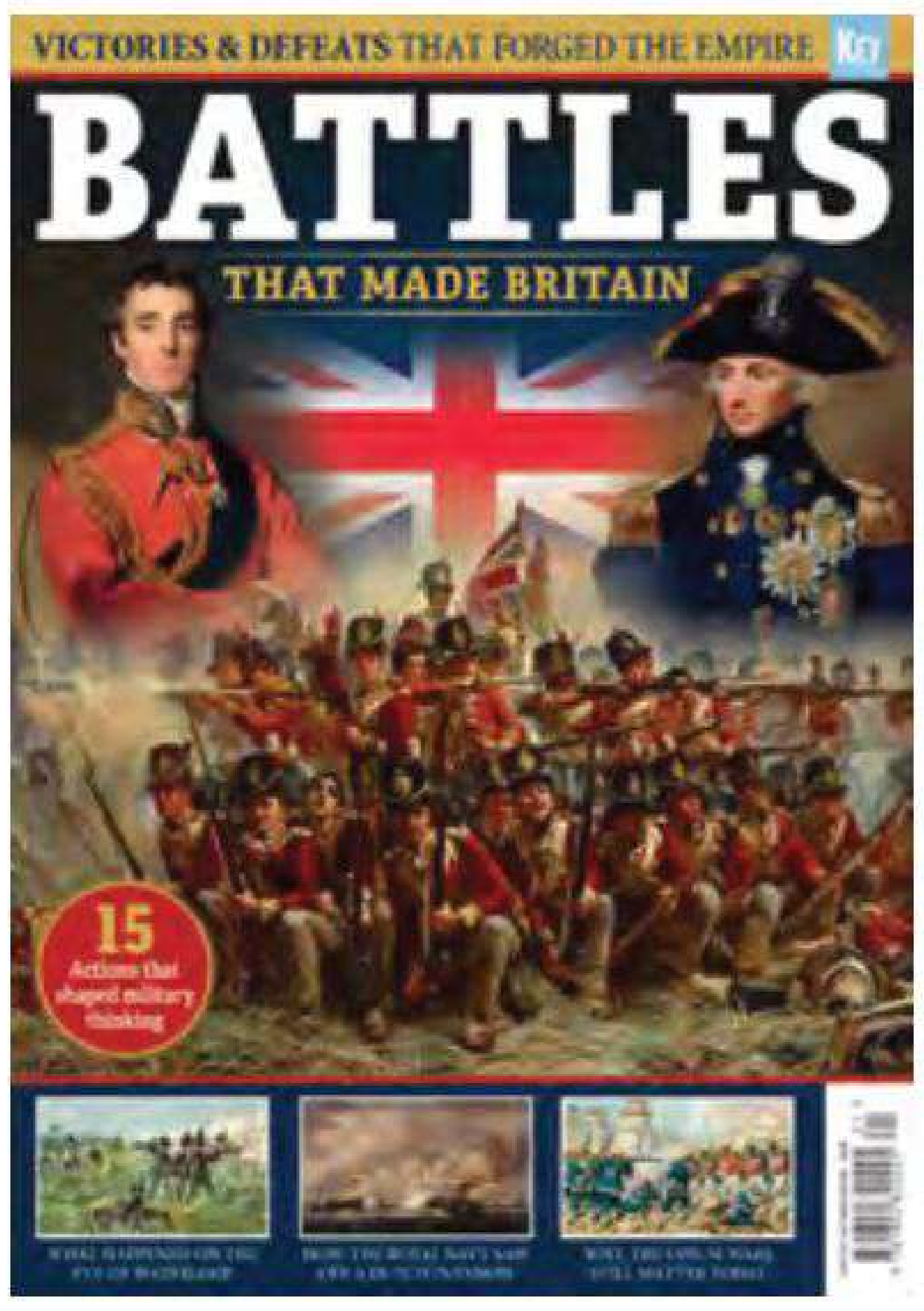
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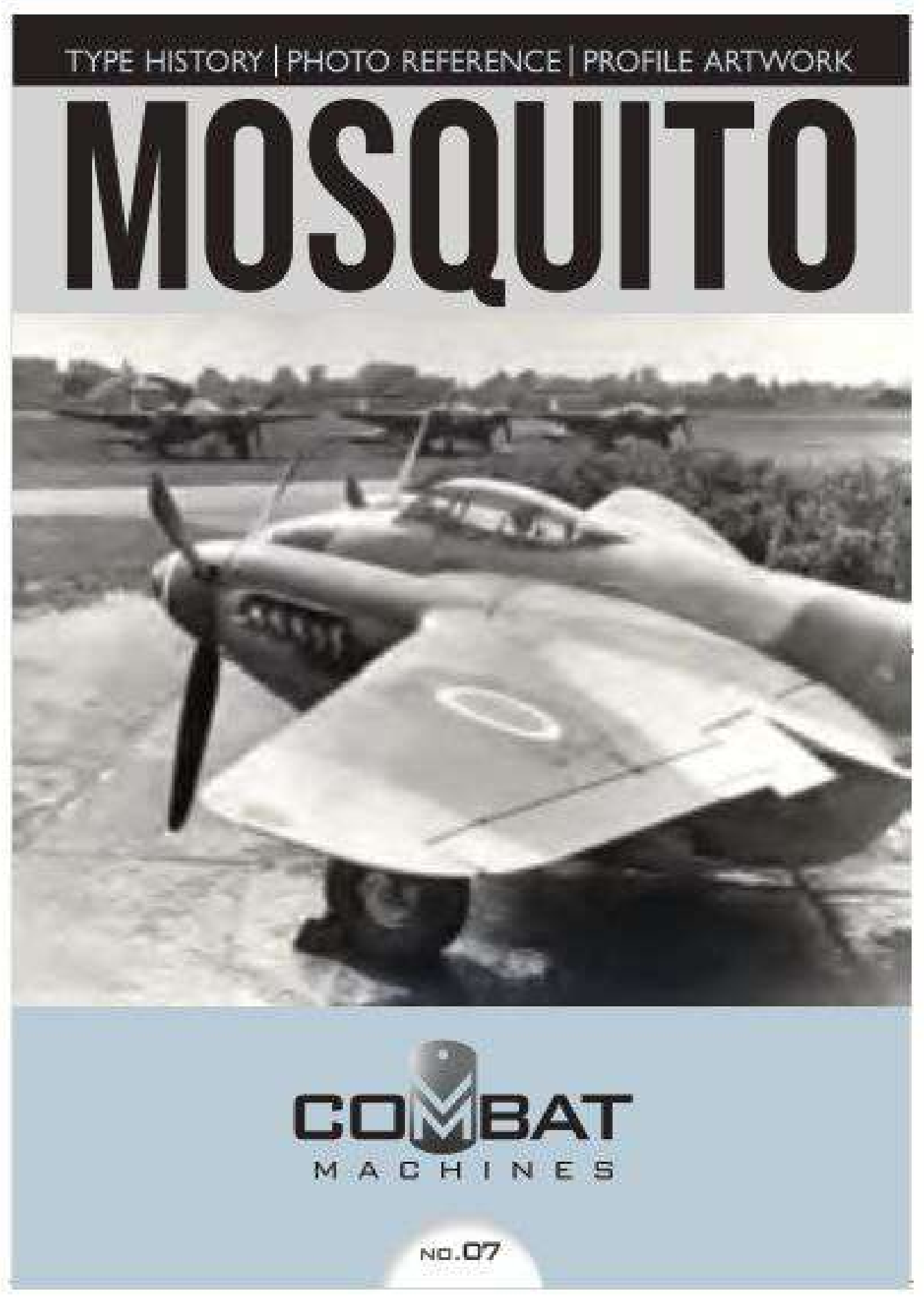
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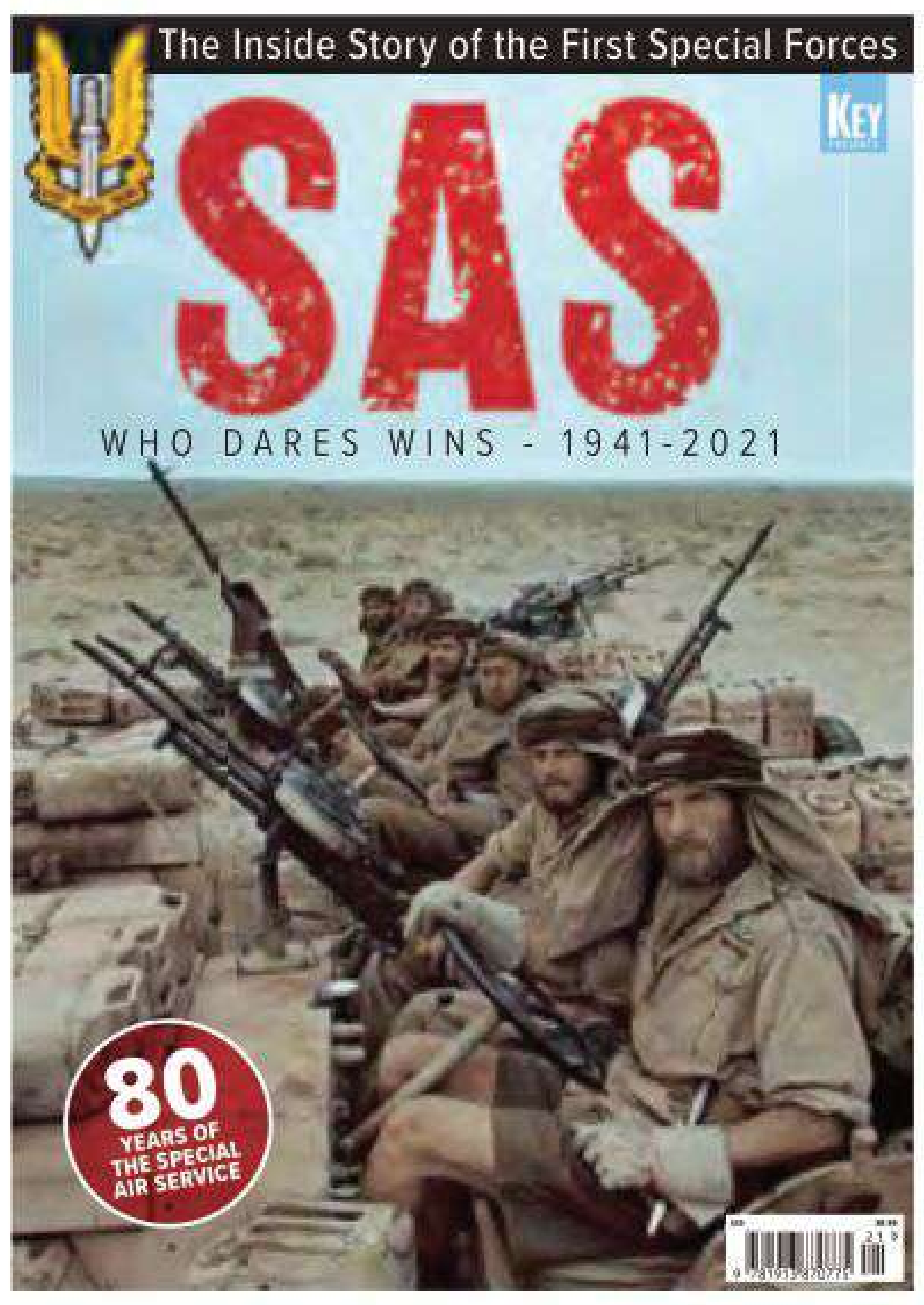
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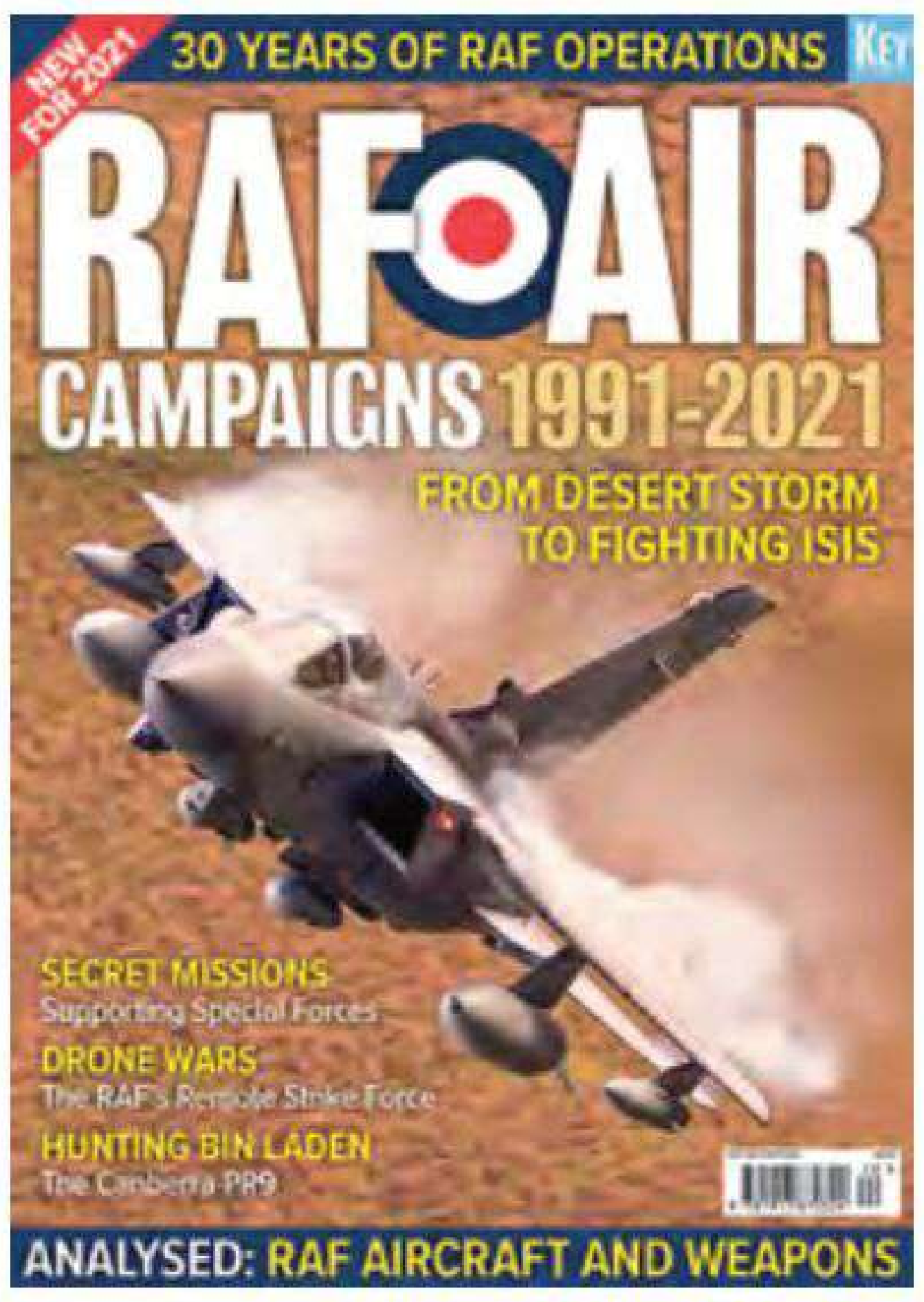
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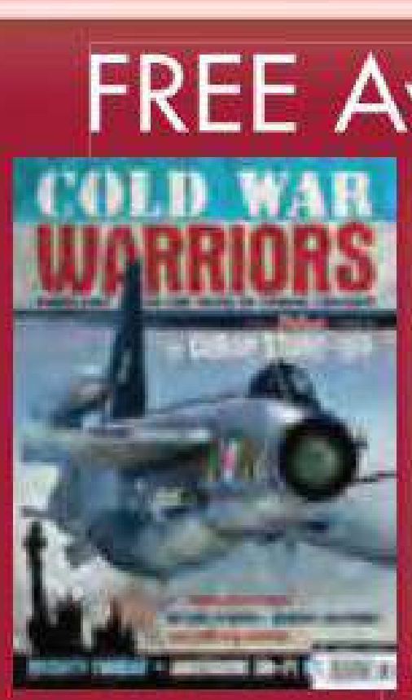
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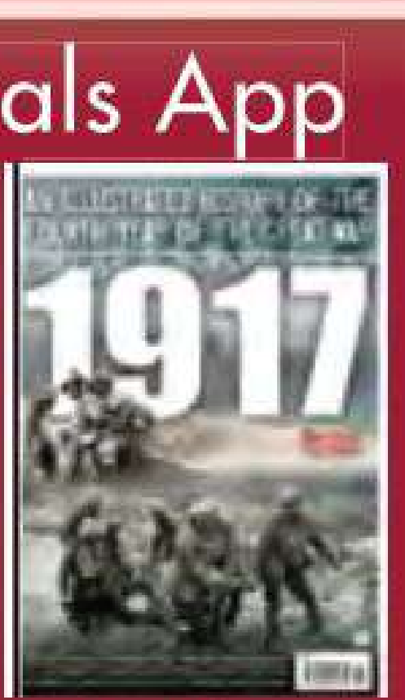

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WORLD WAR Two in North Africa and the Eastern Mediterranean stretched across thousands of square miles of inhospitable desert. The war involved a series of offensive thrusts and defensive parries by both sides, tremendous losses in men and materiel, and eventually the destruction of an Axis army that rivalled that of the German debacle at Stalingrad on the Eastern Front in early 1943.

The heroes of the Desert War were many, from Britain and the Commonwealth, the United States, and the Free French forces, fighting even as their homeland was occupied by the Nazis. The saga of the war in North Africa is a stirring chapter in the history of World War Two.

An Italian offensive in 1940 resulted in the occupation of British Somaliland and towns across the frontier in Kenya and the Sudan. In September, the Italians launched an offensive into Egypt. British forces, which had reached a peak strength of about 100,000 that year, achieved significant success during a counteroffensive in East Africa in January 1941.

Meanwhile, to the northwest, British forces responded to the Italian incursion into Egypt. General Sir Archibald Wavell, Commonwealth Commander-in-Chief Middle East, authorised *Operation Compass*, a spectacular success. The Western Desert Force, which was renamed XIII Corps in January 1941 and became the nucleus of the British Eighth Army, captured 130,000 Italian prisoners, including 22 generals, while suffering fewer than 1,800 casualties.

As the Italian rout unfolded, Hitler committed German troops to the theatre in support of his Axis cohort Benito Mussolini. General Erwin Rommel, who would achieve lasting fame as the Desert Fox, arrived in North Africa in February. The German formations were formally named the Deutsches Afrika Korps, while the entire Axis military presence in North Africa became known as Panzer Armee Afrika.

Rommel stabilised the situation, turning back a series of British offensive actions during the spring and summer of 1941. In April, he launched an offensive of his own, pushing the Commonwealth forces out of Libya and besieging the vital port of Tobruk. For seven months, beleaguered Australian and British troops held Tobruk.

On November 18, the British launched *Operation Crusader* with the intent of raising the siege. Heavy losses occurred on both sides, and during the first week of December, troops of the British 70th Division broke out of the Tobruk encirclement and linked up with New Zealanders, ending the 242-day siege.

Rommel regrouped and received badly needed reinforcements. In January 1942, Panzer Armee Afrika drove the British eastward 380 miles to the Gazala Line. Rommel renewed his attacks at the end of May. At Sidi Muftah, the 150th Brigade Group held out against six German armoured assaults before being virtually wiped out.

NORTH AFRICA AND THE EASTERN MEDITERRANEAN

1940 - 1943

ABOVE General Bernard Law Montgomery led the British Eighth Army to victory in the desert of North Africa. Public Domain

To the south at Bir Hacheim, 3,600 soldiers of the Free French Brigade fought off the Italian Trieste Division and held for 16 days, but by the middle of June the Eighth Army withdrew east. Rommel brushed counterattacks aside, and the Germans rolled into Tobruk, capturing huge stockpiles of fuel and materiel.

Rommel was poised for final victory in the summer of 1942. His armoured spearheads had crossed the Egyptian frontier and mauled four British divisions at Mersa Matruh on June 26.

Pressing on, the Germans approached the railway whistle-stop at El Alamein, just 240 kilometres from the Egyptian capital at Cairo, where the British Eighth Army would make its final desert stand. The British position was anchored in the north by the Mediterranean Sea and to the south by the impassable Qattara Depression.

Eighth Army, commanded by General Claude Auchinleck, managed to slow the German offensive in the summer, but Prime Minister Winston Churchill was frustrated, replacing Auchinleck with General Bernard Law Montgomery.

Rommel's supply lines were stretched thin, while Montgomery's forces grew in strength daily.

German combat efficiency waned, and in the early hours of October 23, 1942, Montgomery unleashed the revitalised Eighth Army at El Alamein, winning a significant victory in one of the turning points of World War Two. After 11 days of fighting, the Eighth Army had destroyed 450 German tanks and 1,000 artillery pieces. More than 50,000 German and Italian troops were killed, wounded, or captured. British losses amounted to 13,000 casualties and 500 tanks destroyed or disabled. The Germans were obliged to begin a fighting retreat to Tunisia, 1,400 miles west.

On November 8, 1942, Allied forces executed *Operation Torch*, landing nearly 100,000 troops on the beaches at Oran, Algiers, and Casablanca in the west. Rommel was forced to fight on two fronts, and US ground troops entered combat against the Germans for the first time.

By early April 1943, the vanguard of the US II Corps and the 12th Lancers of the Eighth Army linked up. In May, Rommel was recalled to Germany.

Surrounded and pressed against the sea, Axis forces under General Wilhelm Ritter von Thoma surrendered on May 12, 1943. The Allies had won a complete victory and approximately 300,000 Axis soldiers were taken prisoner.

The courage and sacrifice of individuals secured the Allied triumph in North Africa. Their stories are compelling, and a few of these are related here.

LEFT A British tank passes a burning German PzKpfw. IV tank somewhere in the North African desert during *Operation Crusader.* Public Domain

SUSAN TRAVERS

September 23, 1909 – December 18, 2003

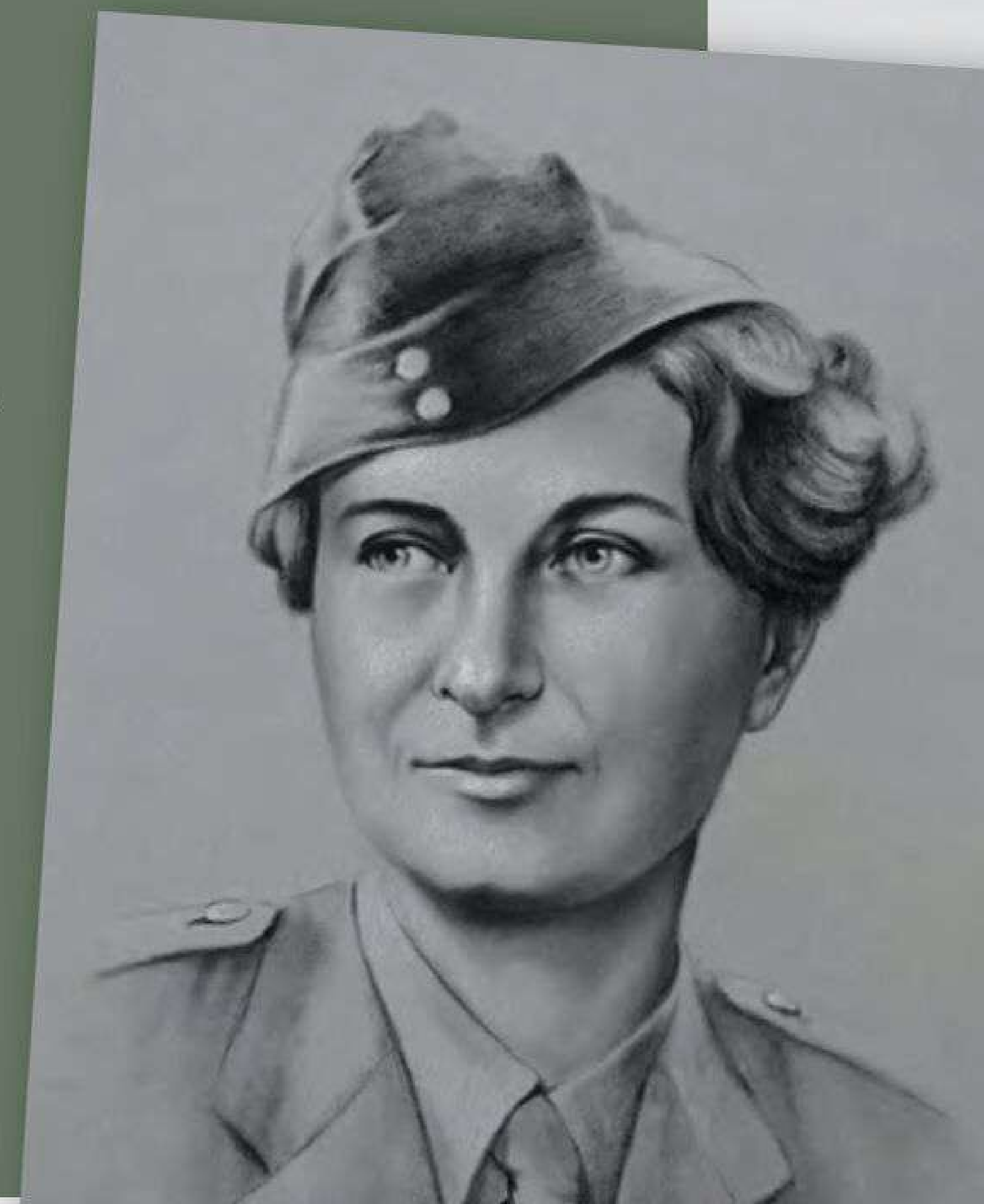
French Foreign Legion | Chevalier de la Legion d'honneur; Croix de Guerre

THE SURVIVORS of the 1st Free French Brigade were evacuating the embattled defences at Bir Hachiem, and on the night of June 10, 1942, Colonel Marie-Pierre Koenig's staff car sped through the darkness without any lights. At the wheel was a woman, by this time a veteran of the desert war. Susan Travers, British by birth, had joined the French Red Cross with the outbreak of World War Two and tried but failed to serve as an ambulance driver with the French Expeditionary Force in Finland the following year. She travelled to Dakar, West Africa, and transferred with the French Foreign Legion to Eritrea.

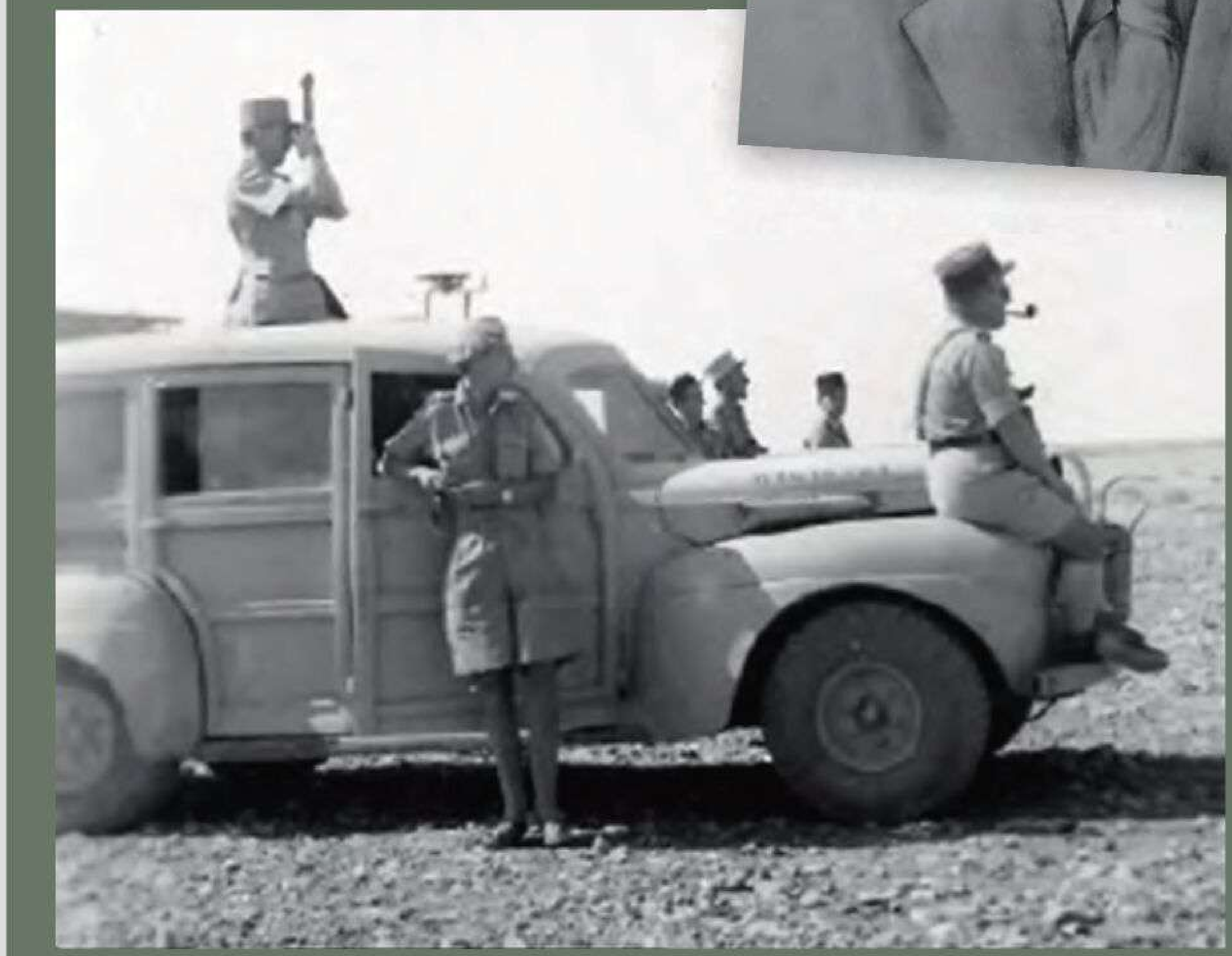
Assigned to the Free French 1st Division, she served as a driver for a doctor in the Middle East during operations in Lebanon and Syria. By this time, her nursing career had been abandoned, and the 13th Demi-Brigade of the Foreign Legion was later fully incorporated into the 1st Division.

With Bir Hachiem under attack by elements of eight German and Italian divisions, Koenig ordered an evacuation following a heroic two-week stand. Travers took the wheel at the end of a departing column. Koenig's car was buffeted by incoming enemy shells, and its roof was torn off by a near-miss. Travers and an assistant managed to make quick repairs and drove on. After reaching safety the following morning, she counted 11 bullet holes in the vehicle.

Travers continued to serve with the Foreign Legion in Italy and on the Western Front in France and Germany. She drove a self-propelled anti-tank gun for a period of time and was wounded when her vehicle detonated a land mine. After the war, she formally enlisted as the only woman ever to officially serve in the French Foreign Legion. She later served in Indochina and married a soldier of the Legion who had also survived the evacuation of Bir Hacheim.



RIGHT Susan Travers became the only woman to formally enlist in the French Foreign Legion. Creative Commons



ABOVE Susan Travers drove this Ford utility vehicle in North Africa. Colonel Marie-Pierre Koenig and staff officers are seen in the photo. Public Domain

MAJOR GENERAL JOHN CHARLES 'JOCK' CAMPBELL

January 10, 1894 – February 26, 1942

British Army | Victoria Cross; Distinguished Service Order and Bar; Military Cross

ABOVE Major General Jock Campbell received the Victoria Cross, promotion, and command of the 7th Armoured Division but was killed in a Jeep accident. Public Domain

THE CLAY road had only recently been put in place, and the driver of the Jeep lost control. He was thrown from the vehicle and survived. His passenger, however, was killed in the accident. It was a decidedly inappropriate end for Major General Jock Campbell, an energetic officer aged 48 years who had not only proven himself an innovator in the Desert War but was also a stout-hearted fighter and decorated veteran of the Great War.

In the early months of World War Two, Campbell had developed the use of mobile flying columns to harass Italian forces in Africa. These heavily armed and rapidly deployed strike groups were stellar hit-and-run components of the Western Desert Force. In fact, the flying columns were so successful that they earned the nickname 'Jock Columns'.

By the autumn of 1941, however, Campbell had another opportunity to prove his mettle. During the British offensive dubbed *Operation Crusader,* he was in command of the 7th Support Group, attached to the 7th Armoured Division. Along with other formations, including the 7th Armoured Brigade and the 5th South African Infantry Brigade, Brigadier Campbell's command was defending the airfield at Sidi Rezegh, south of the besieged city of Tobruk, when two armoured divisions of the German Afrika Korps attacked on November 21.

The airfield's defenders were battered, but the line held. Campbell seemed to be everywhere, shouting orders while standing and holding tight to the windscreen of his open staff car. At times, he climbed out, walking among his troops, or rode atop a tank. Campbell twice replaced wounded men, servicing a gun while under fire. Casualties on both sides were heavy.

By November 22, Campbell had been wounded but refused evacuation, choosing to remain and bolster the spirit of his troops. However, heavy losses compelled him to withdraw on November 23. Eyewitnesses attested to his bravery, and he received the Victoria Cross. Promotion to major general followed in February 1942, and Campbell was given command of the 7th Armoured Division. Tragically, he was killed just three weeks later.

BELOW Standing atop a Grant tank, General Jock Campbell and other officers watch the fall of shells from British armour and artillery. Public Domain

ABOVE Colonel Robert Laycock, later rising to the rank of general, accompanied Keyes' Commando force during *Operation Flipper.* Public Domain

LIEUTENANT COLONEL GEOFFREY KEYES

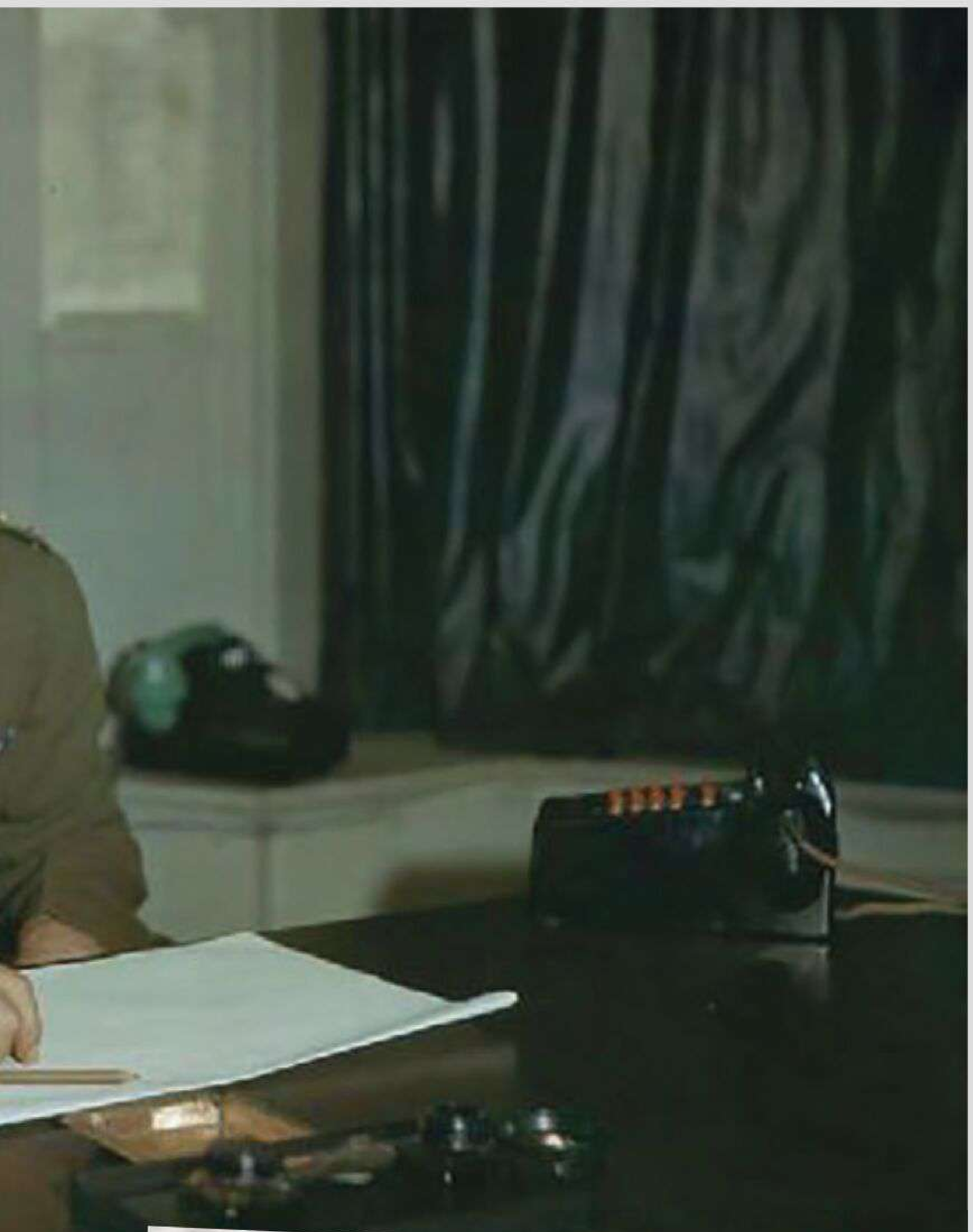
May 18, 1917 – November 18, 1941

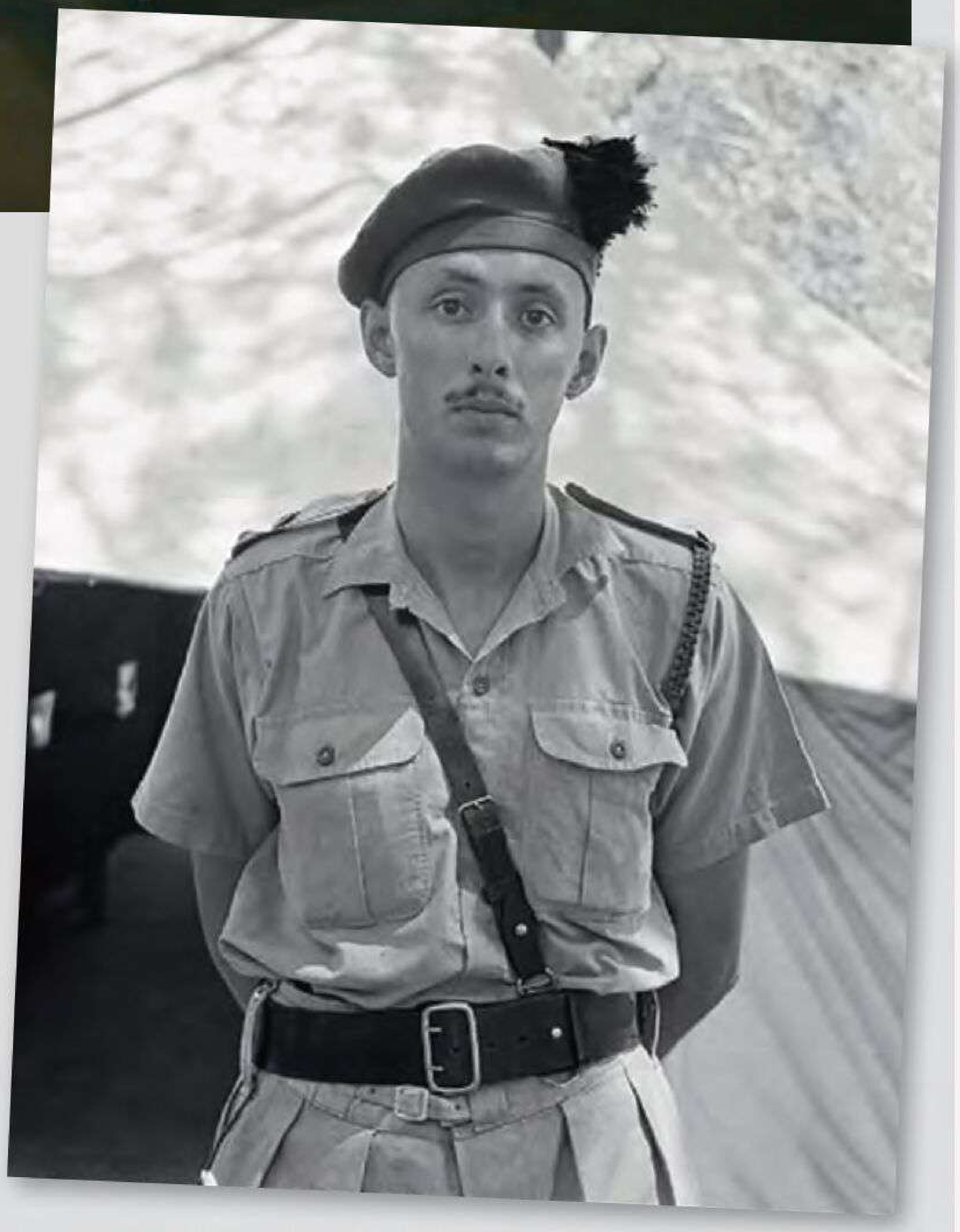
British Army | Victoria Cross; Military Cross; Croix de Guerre

GERMAN GENERAl Erwin Rommel, the Desert Fox, was the nemesis of Allied forces in North Africa, and when the opportunity presented itself to eliminate the enemy commander, British Commandos were eager to take advantage. After fighting in Syria and Lebanon, earning the Military Cross, young Lieutenant Colonel Geoffrey Keyes was just the kind of intrepid leader for such a clandestine mission. Keyes, the son of Fleet Admiral Roger Keyes of the Royal Navy, was only 24; however, during redeployments he had been allowed to remain in Egypt with 110 volunteers from No. 11 Commando.

Intelligence sources indicated that Rommel was present at a villa near the coastal town of Beda Littoria, and Keyes put together a raid designated *Operation Flipper*. On the night of November 14, 1941, the Commandos came ashore from two Royal Navy submarines, but foul weather resulted in the loss of much of their equipment, while many were unable to come ashore, stranded aboard their sub. After hiding in a cave, Keyes led 25 men toward the objective on their third night in enemy territory.

Swiftly, the raiders reached the villa. Keyes, however, was unable to gain entry and directed another Commando who spoke fluent German to pound on the door and shout. When a German soldier opened the door, he was overpowered and shot during a brief struggle. Details of the moments that followed remain confused to this day.





ABOVE Lieutenant Colonel Geoffrey Keyes was killed in the opening moments of *Operation Flipper* and received a posthumous Victoria Cross. **Public Domain**

Accounts conflict as to whether Keyes was wounded while grappling with the enemy soldier or shot after opening another door, closing it, then opening it again to toss a grenade inside. Regardless, within minutes the young officer was dead.

The raid deteriorated into an evasion exercise. Keyes and another Commando were killed, 28 were captured, and three escaped. Rommel was actually in Rome at the time of the raid and never in danger. Keyes' posthumous Victoria Cross citation is dated June 19, 1942.

CAPTAIN CHARLES UPHAM

September 21, 1908
– November 22, 1994

New Zealand Army
| Victoria Cross and Bar

CHARLES UPHAM, a gallant soldier of the New Zealand armed forces, had already received the Victoria Cross in a ceremony at Buckingham Palace on May 11, 1945, when a second recommendation for Britain's most prestigious decoration for heroism in battle was received.

King George VI was taken aback and asked: "Does he deserve it?" The reply from Major General Howard Kippenberger was a crisp: "In my respectful opinion, sir, Upham won the VC several times over."

The only soldier to receive the Victoria Cross twice in World War Two, Upham was only the third in the history of the Commonwealth armed forces to be so honoured. His story of heroism is indeed extraordinary.

Upham earned his first Victoria Cross in mid-May 1941, during an assault at Maleme, the location of a vital airfield on the island of Crete. The officer led his platoon forward a distance of 3,000 yards as he destroyed a machine gun nest and then headed for an enemy-occupied house and silenced another. He took out a third enemy machine gun position after rushing to within 15 yards of the startled crew. He then shot two Germans while detailed to guide an isolated company to safety. Later, Upham, though wounded, moved forward again with a pair of riflemen and killed 22 enemy soldiers with a Bren gun.

The London Gazette announced Upham's first Victoria Cross in its October 14, 1941, edition.

Upham's second Victoria Cross was recommended after action at El Ruweisat Ridge in July 1942. He led an attack against a pair of German strongpoints, destroying an enemy tank and several machine gun positions with grenades; however, a German bullet shattered his arm. Once their position was secured, Upham led his men in repulsing a strong counterattack. Later in the day, he was severely wounded and captured when the enemy struck once more and overran his company, which had been reduced to only six men.

Held prisoner in Italy and then at the infamous Colditz Castle, Upham was liberated at the end of the war.

ABOVE New Zealander Charles Upham was the only soldier to receive the Victoria Cross twice during World War Two. **Public Domain**

LEFT A group of Commonwealth soldiers pause during the defence of a fortified position on the island of Crete, where Charles Upham earned his first Victoria Cross. **Public Domain**

ABOVE During their deployment to the Middle East, Australian soldiers of the 7th Infantry Division arrive at the port of Beirut, Lebanon, in 1941. Public Domain

SERGEANT BILL KIBBY

April 15, 1903 – October 31, 1942

Australian Army | Victoria Cross

ABOVE Sergeant Bill Kibby of the Australian 7th Infantry Division was killed in action during the Battle of El Alamein. Public Domain

AUSTRALIAN SOLDIERS made a significant contribution to the final Allied victory in North Africa and the Eastern Mediterranean. Among the most notable of these 'Diggers' was Sergeant Bill Kibby, who enlisted in the all-volunteer Second Australian Imperial Force on June 29, 1940 and served on garrison duty in Syria before participating in the defence of Tobruk, the vital Libyan port city that was under siege in the autumn of 1941.

Kibby fought with the fabled Australian 7th Infantry Division, a soldier of the 2/48th Infantry Battalion. He was again in harm's way during the fighting around El Alamein, inside the Egyptian frontier, in the summer of 1942. Then, during the pivotal Eighth Army offensive launched in October he demonstrated incredible heroism.

From October 23-31, the Australians were engaged with Germans defending strong positions, and Kibby took charge of No. 17 Platoon when his commanding officer was killed in the struggle for high ground at Miteiriya Ridge. On the first day of the offensive, Kibby rushed forward against a German machine gun nest, killing three enemy soldiers with bursts from his Thompson submachine gun and forcing 122 others to surrender. A recommendation for the Distinguished Conduct Medal would have been forthcoming, but the officer intending to sponsor the decoration was killed in action. As the fighting intensified during the coming days, Kibby offered encouragement to his men and restored communications while under fire when telephone lines were severed.

By the end of the month, the 2/48th had lost nearly 700 soldiers killed or wounded and could muster only 213 men. On the 31st, No. 17 Platoon was ordered to attack a position designated 'Ring Contour 25' behind enemy lines. Machine gun fire inflicted heavy casualties on the Australians as they advanced, and Kibby moved forward alone, throwing grenades as he went. On the verge of taking the position singlehandedly, he was cut down by a burst of machine gun fire.

Kibby's Victoria Cross citation was published in the January 26, 1943 edition of *The London Gazette*.

SECOND LIEUTENANT MOANA-NUI-A-KIWA-NGARIMU

April 7, 1918 – March 27, 1943

New Zealand Expeditionary Force | Victoria Cross

THE FIGHTING was intense on March 26, 1943, as soldiers of the New Zealand 2nd Division engaged the Germans at windswept Point 209 at Tebaga Gap in Tunisia. Second Lieutenant Moana-Nui-a-Kiwa-Ngarimu of Company C, 28th Māori Infantry Battalion, was in the thick of it.

Leading a platoon into action, Ngarimu was charged with capturing a promontory below the point's summit. In a frontal assault against the German defences, the New Zealanders ignored machine gun and mortar fire despite absorbing casualties. The 24-year-old lieutenant was the first to reach the hilltop and personally silenced at least two enemy machine gun positions. The surviving Germans retreated, but the reverse slope of the high ground remained under steady enemy fire from the summit of Point 209.

Ngarimu and his platoon solidified their gain and fought off several German counterattacks during the night, withstanding an intense mortar barrage, and shredding the enemy infantry that had charged toward the hilltop. During the heavy action, Ngarimu was wounded twice – a bullet entering his shoulder and a

COLONEL WILLIAM H. WILBUR

September 24, 1888 – December 27, 1979

U.S. Army | Medal of Honor; Silver Star; Bronze Star

WHEN AMERICAN soldiers hit the beaches of North Africa during *Operation Torch* on November 8, 1942, the situation was uncertain. Would the Vichy French fire on the US troops or cooperate? Colonel William H. Wilbur was determined to contact the Vichy authorities and minimise casualties after coming ashore with General George S. Patton, Jr.'s Western Task Force at Casablanca, Morocco.

shard of shrapnel tearing into his leg. Although other battalion and company officers urged him to evacuate, the gutsy lieutenant refused to leave his men. At one point Ngarimu rushed to a threatened position as German soldiers reached the hilltop and drove them back, killing several. As his ammunition was exhausted, he threw rocks at the fleeing enemy.

By morning, Ngarimu and only two other soldiers, both unwounded, remained capable of resisting the enemy, but timely reinforcements arrived. During a final German assault, Ngarimu stood, Tommy gun blazing, and was killed in a hail of fire. *The London Gazette* reported: "As he fell, he came to rest almost on top of those of the enemy who had fallen..."

Lieutenant Ngarimu, a veteran of campaigns in Greece and Crete as well, was the first of only two Māori soldiers to receive the Victoria Cross during World War Two. The medal was accepted by his parents on October 6, 1943.

ABOVE Second Lieutenant Moana-nui-a-Kiwa-Ngarimu was the first New Zealand Māori soldier to receive the Victoria Cross during World War Two. Public Domain

LEFT Soldiers of the 28th Māori Battalion perform a Haka in Egypt during the North Africa campaign. The Māori were fierce warriors. Public Domain

Wilbur had been chosen to deliver messages to Vichy commanders who were believed sympathetic to the Allied cause, including Admiral Francois Michelier, commander of the French naval forces at Casablanca. The mission, however, proved difficult. He commandeered a vehicle and travelled 16 miles, much of the time in total darkness, through enemy-occupied territory.

Upon reaching Vichy lines, Wilbur persuaded a French officer to provide safe passage to the nearest division headquarters. Once there, Wilbur was informed that his contact had been arrested for treason. He attempted to deliver the conciliatory letter to the division commander but was refused and placed the document on the officer's desk and departed. As he walked toward his vehicle, another officer offered to take him to Admiral Michelier's office. Michelier, however, refused to meet with Wilbur.

When Wilbur returned to the American lines, he observed a Vichy artillery battery in action against Allied ships just offshore. He immediately rounded up a task force of four tanks and a company of infantry to silence the guns. Riding atop one of the tanks, he led the successful assault against the position.

For valour, Wilbur received the Medal of Honor from President Franklin D. Roosevelt on January 22, 1943. He later served during the Korean War and declined an advisory position in the government of South Korean President Syngman Rhee. He retired from the Army in 1947 with the rank of brigadier general.

RIGHT American soldiers crowd aboard a landing craft as they churn toward the beaches of North Africa during *Operation Torch.* Public Domain

LEFT Colonel William Wilbur received the Medal of Honor after completing a hazardous mission during the opening hours of *Operation Torch.* Public Domain

ABOVE French Foreign Legion soldiers man a 75mm artillery piece during the fierce and heroic defence of Bir Hacheim in 1942. Public Domain

PRINCE DIMITRI AMILAKHVARI

October 31, 1906 – October 24, 1942

French Foreign Legion | Chevalier de la Legion d'honneur; Companion of the Liberation; Croix de Guerre

THE FRENCH Foreign Legion might be considered an unlikely affiliation for a Prince of Georgia. However, when World War Two erupted Dimitri Amilakhvari became an ardent adversary of the Nazis. His family had fled to Istanbul, Turkey, and then made its way to France after the Bolshevik Revolution and the occupation of his homeland by the Red Army in 1921. Amilakhvari graduated from the prestigious St. Cyr military school in Paris and served with the Foreign Legion in North Africa during the 1930s.

During World War II, he participated in the ill-fated Allied campaign in Norway in 1940 and was evacuated. As the Nazis conquered France in the spring of that year, he served in West Africa and then made his way to England and joined the Free French forces. Again posted to Africa, he fought with the Foreign Legion in Eritrea and East Africa against the Italian Fascist forces and in Syria against the Vichy French. On September 6, 1941, Amilakhvari was given command of the 13th Demi-Brigade of the Foreign Legion. The following year, he fought the Axis in Libya at Bir Hacheim, southwest of Tobruk. He later wrote: "We foreigners have only one way to prove to France our gratitude: to be killed…"

ABOVE A prince of Georgia, Dimitri Amilakhvari fought against the Axis in Europe, North Africa, and the Middle East. He was killed in action at El Alamein in 1942. Public Domain

By the autumn of 1942, the British Eighth Army had stopped the relentless drive of Rommel and the vaunted Panzer Army Afrika across the Egyptian frontier. General Bernard Montgomery planned a massive counteroffensive, and in October launched the decisive battle of the campaign at El Alamein. Prince Amilakhvari was true to his pledge and was killed in action on the second day of fighting. His death was not in vain, and the victorious British, Commonwealth, and Free French troops pushed the Germans west across more than a thousand miles of desert.

CAPTAIN ERIC CHARLES TWELVES WILSON

October 2, 1912 – December 23, 2008

British Army | Victoria Cross

ABOVE Captain Eric Wilson received the Victoria Cross for heroism against Italian forces in British Somaliland – and he was very much alive.
Public Domain

IN EARLY 1940, only 1,500 troops defended British Somaliland against the thrust of 350,000 Italian soldiers. Among them was Acting Captain Eric Wilson, assigned to the Somaliland Camel Corps. Outnumbered, the British chose to stand at Tug Aran Pass, occupying four small hills, and Wilson placed his Vickers machine guns on the high ground.

From his command post atop Observation Hill, Wilson and his Somali troops held their ground for the next four days, August 11-15. The officer was already suffering from malaria, but there was no time to think of fever as the Italians hit Observation Hill and nearby Mill Hill on the first day. The defenders threw back the Italians with heavy losses, but the enemy brought artillery forward, firing from a range of just 700 yards.

Wilson was wounded in the shoulder, and a blast from an incoming shell injured his left eye as shards of steel penetrated the firing slits of the command post. His eyeglasses were broken, and his Somali sergeant was killed at his side. Two of the precious machine guns were knocked from their mounts but repaired and returned to their deadly business. As the Italians continued their bombardment for two more days, the defenders bore up as best they could. Late on the afternoon of August 15, the position was finally overrun.

Reports of Wilson's gallantry reached higher echelons of command, and he was immediately recommended for a posthumous Victoria Cross, as he was missing in action and presumed dead. The citation for Britain's highest award for combat heroism actually states that the gallant officer was killed.

However, Wilson was very much alive, a prisoner of the Italians until resurgent British forces defeated the invaders. Wilson was freed and received his Victoria Cross in person at Buckingham Palace in July 1942. He went on to serve with the Long Range Desert Group, the 11th King's African Rifles, and the North Rhodesia Regiment. He retired from the Army in 1949 with the rank of major and was made honorary lieutenant colonel. Wilson lived to the age of 96.

BELOW British and Somali troops defended the rugged high ground at the Tug Aran Gap against the invading Italian Army in 1940.
Public Domain

CAPTAIN PHILIP JOHN GARDNER

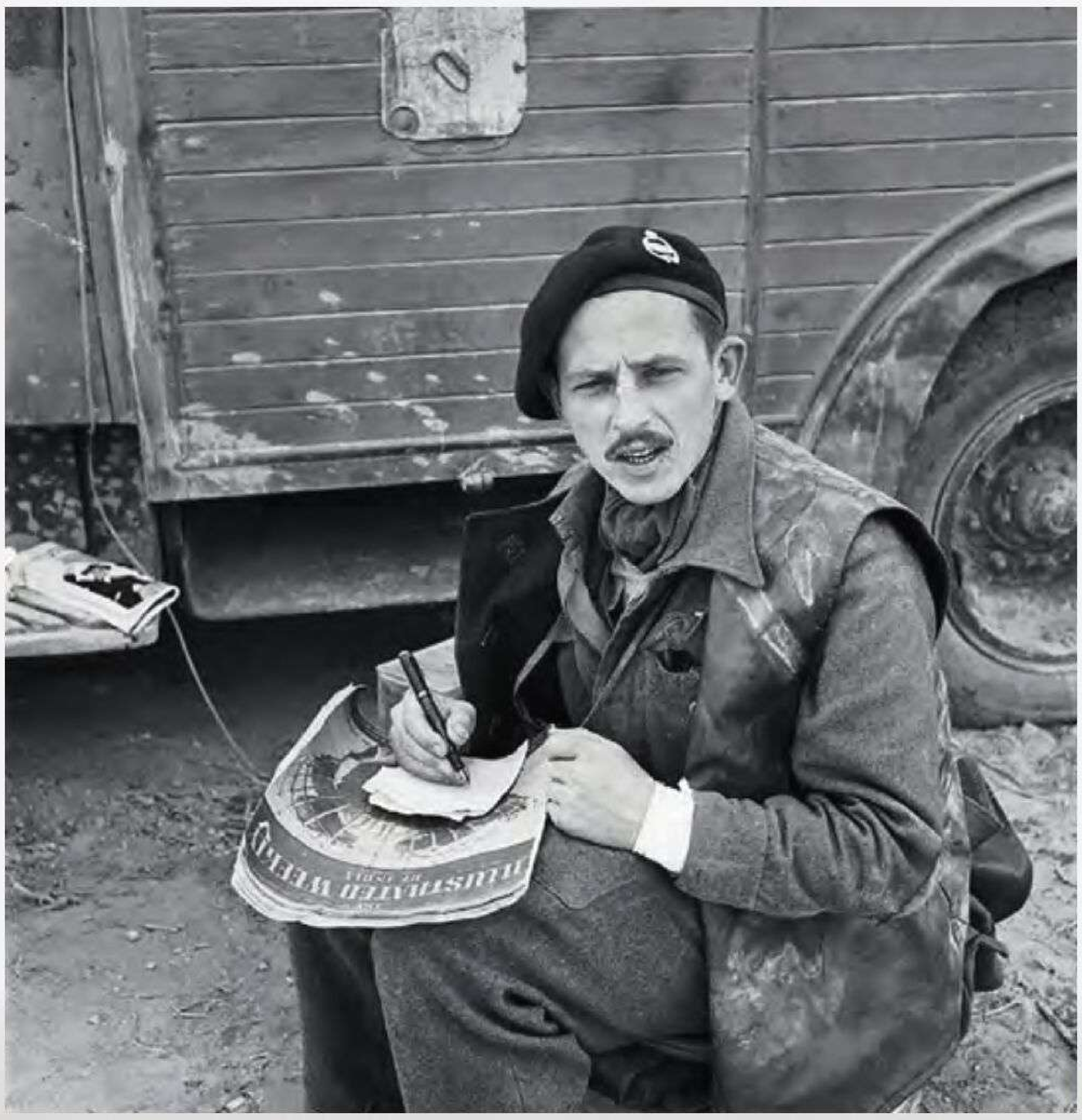
November 18, 1914 – February 16, 2003

British Army | Victoria Cross; Military Cross

THE GARRISON at Tobruk was hard pressed in the autumn of 1941, and with *Operation Crusader* underway Captain Philip 'Pip' Gardner was an acting captain with the 4th Royal Tank Regiment of the British Eighth Army. At age 26, he was already a combat veteran.

During heavy fighting at Halfaya Pass in June, Gardner and a cluster of other tankers had found themselves in the midst of a minefield. Several machines were disabled, their tracks blown off. Lieutenant Rowe, the commanding officer, had exited his tank to inspect its damage and stepped on a mine. Gardner leaped to the officer's aid, braving mortar, machine gun fire, and the hidden mines. There was nothing he could do but administer morphine and stay with the lieutenant until he died. Gardner then led the tank crews safely out of the minefield. He was awarded the Military Cross.

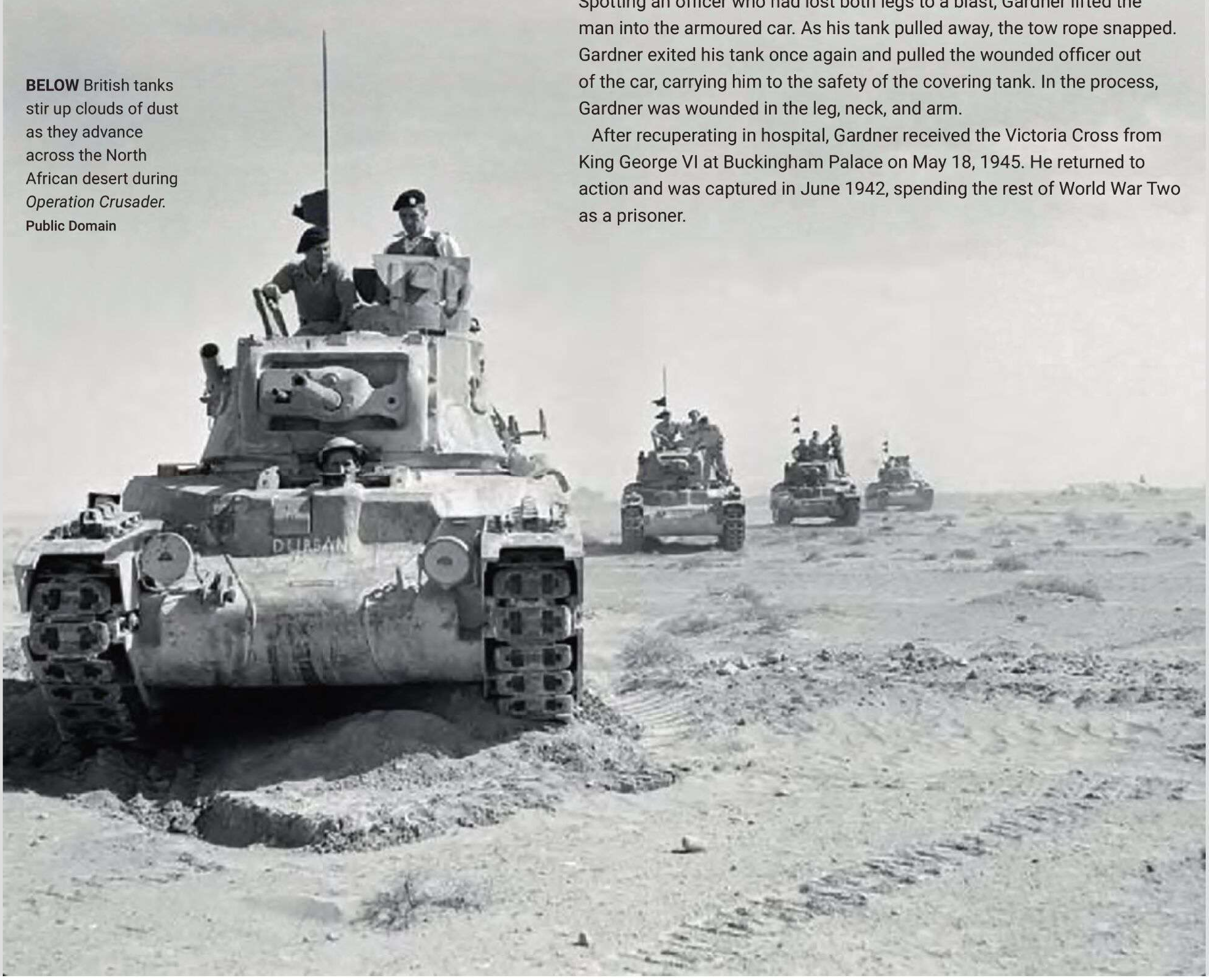
Five months later at Tobruk, Gardner again displayed terrific personal courage. On November 23, he was ordered to lead two tanks to recover a pair of armoured cars of the King's Dragoon Guards, which were disabled and under intense enemy fire. He leaped into his "battle buggy," as he called his tank, and found the armoured cars 200 yards apart.



ABOVE Captain Philip John 'Pip' Gardner saved a severely wounded officer and received the Victoria Cross from King George VI. **Public Domain**

Gardner moved forward and secured a tow rope to one of the vehicles. Spotting an officer who had lost both legs to a blast, Gardner lifted the man into the armoured car. As his tank pulled away, the tow rope snapped. Gardner exited his tank once again and pulled the wounded officer out of the car, carrying him to the safety of the covering tank. In the process, Gardner was wounded in the leg, neck, and arm.

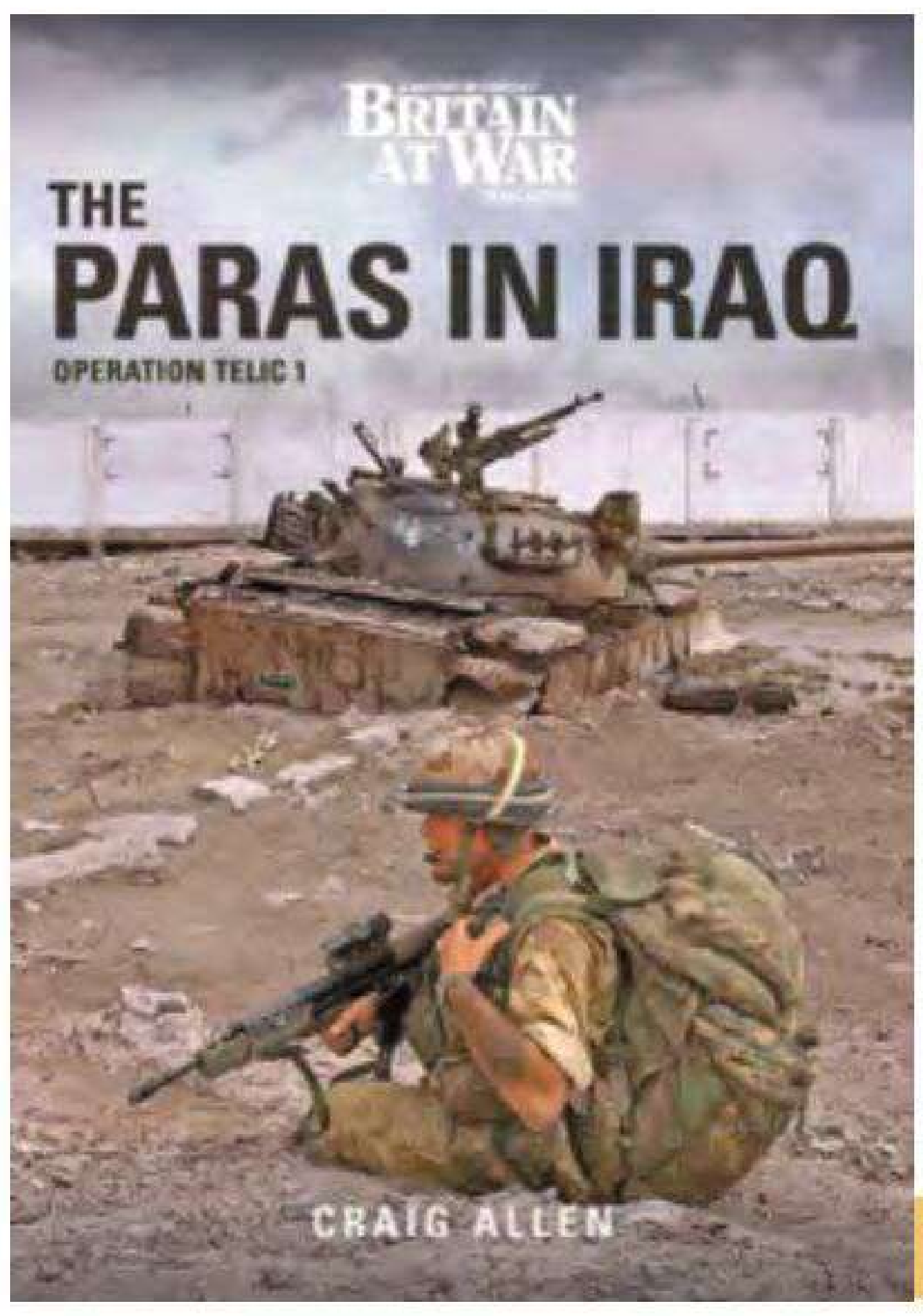
After recuperating in hospital, Gardner received the Victoria Cross from King George VI at Buckingham Palace on May 18, 1945. He returned to action and was captured in June 1942, spending the rest of World War Two as a prisoner.



BELOW British tanks stir up clouds of dust as they advance across the North African desert during *Operation Crusader.* **Public Domain**

MAIL ORDER

THE PARAS IN IRAQ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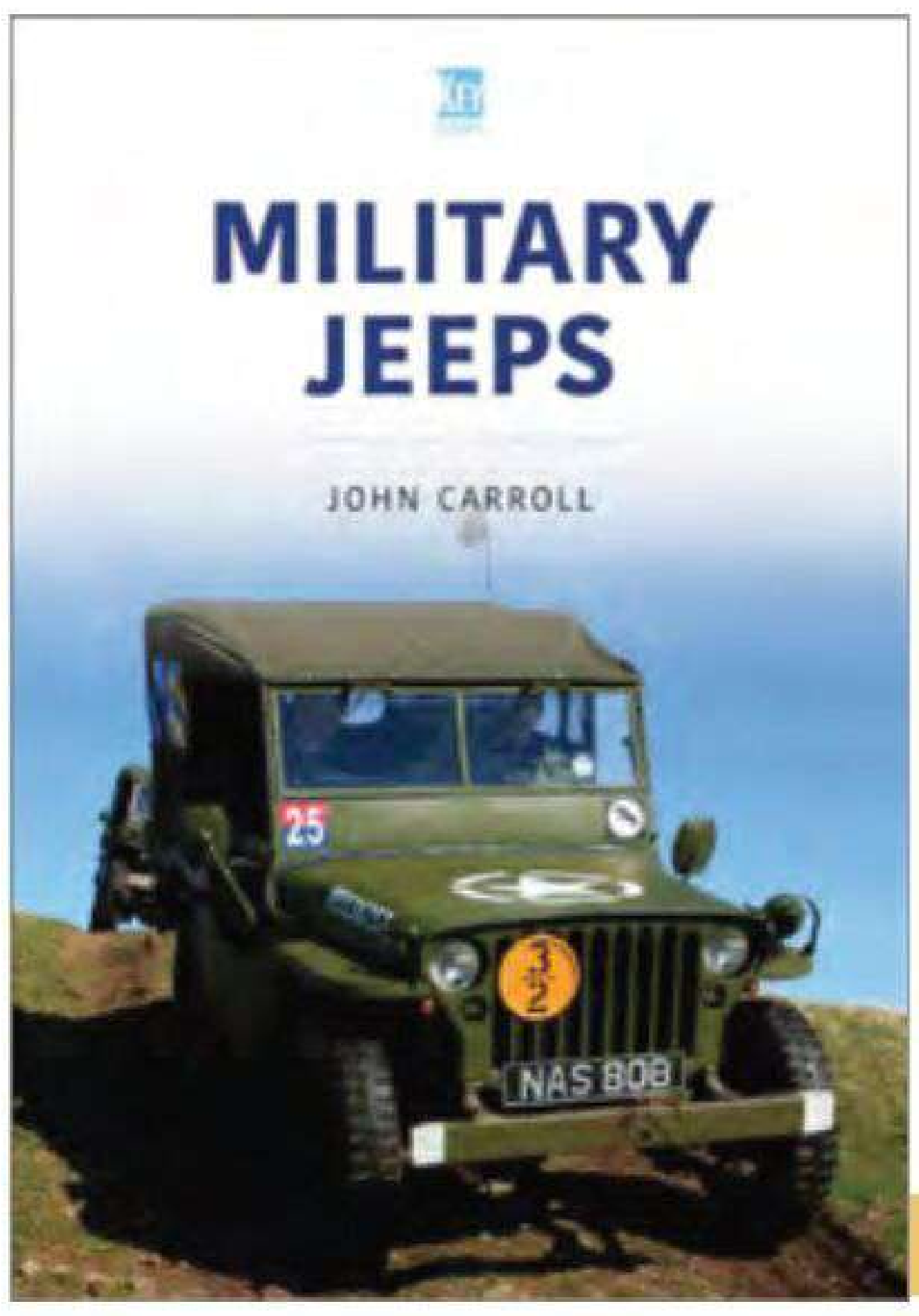
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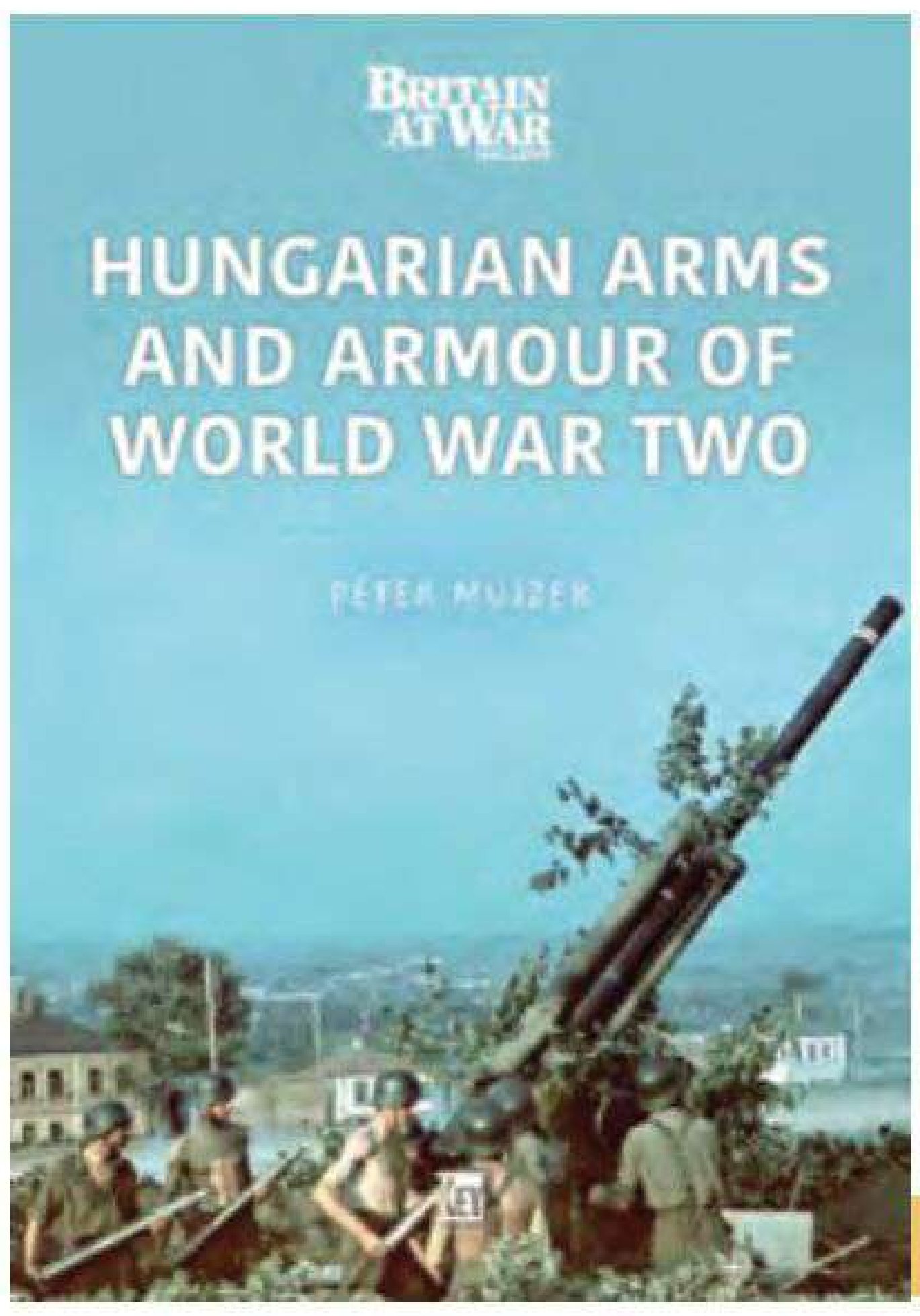
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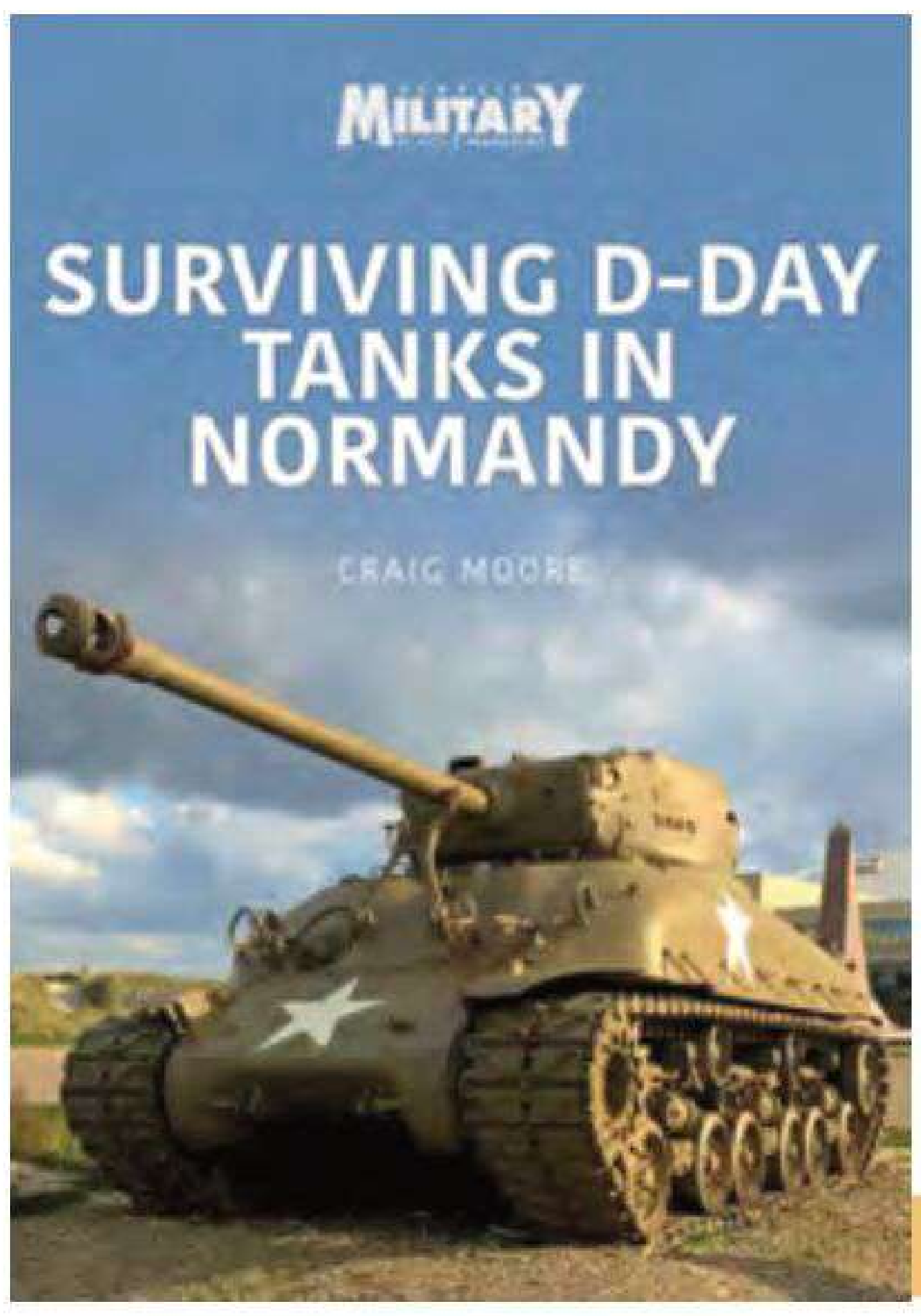
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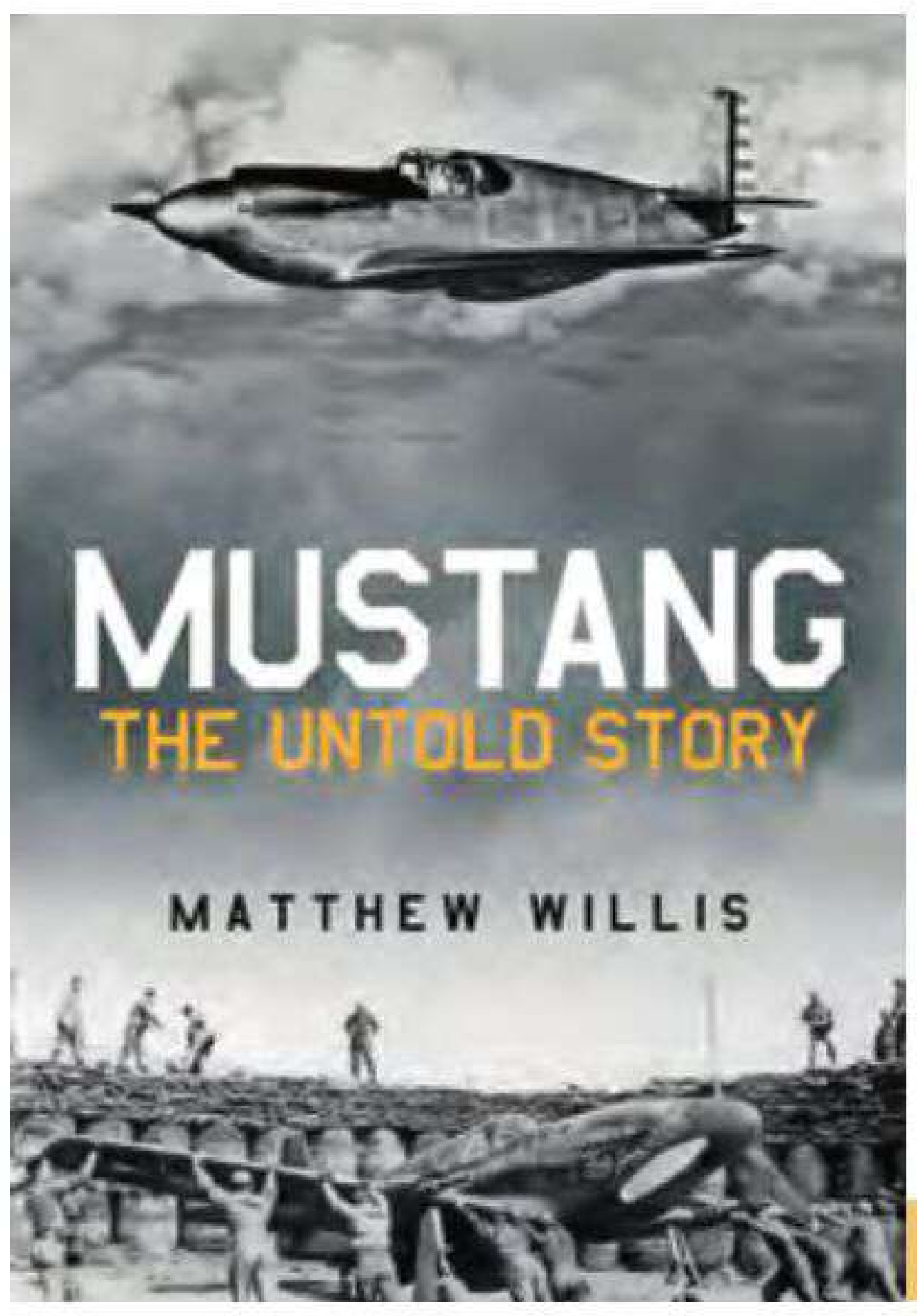
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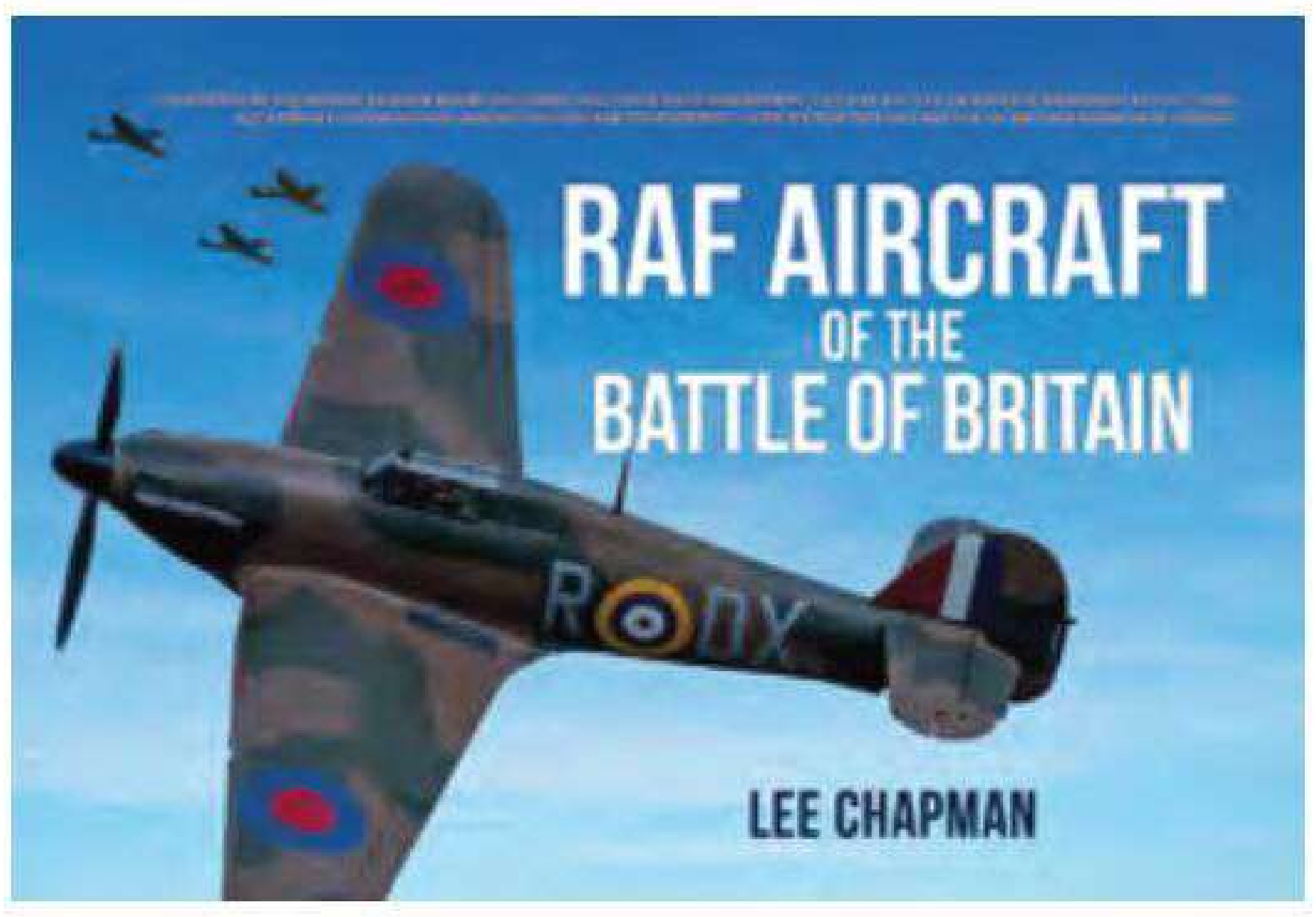
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THE WAR IN THE WESTERN SEAS

1939 - 1945

WORLD WAR Two in the Western seas could well have been the theatre in which the Allies suffered a defeat from which they could not recover.

In his post-war multivolume history of the conflict, Prime Minister Winston Churchill wrote: "The only thing that ever really frightened me during the war was the U-Boat peril...It did not take the form of flaring battles and glittering achievements, it manifested itself through statistics, diagrams, and curves unknown to the nation, incomprehensible to the public."

Churchill understood the gravity of the U-boat menace. Always close to the Royal Navy, he had seen for himself a generation earlier, while serving as First Lord of the Admiralty, how German U-boats nearly starved the British Isles of food and vital war materiel during the Great War. During World War Two, the U-boats again mounted an offensive that threatened to sever the lifelines from North America and other vital points across the globe, sinking such tonnage in merchant shipping that the issue remained in doubt for some time.

Further, there was the spectre of Hitler's surface raiders, some of them purpose built to devastate Allied shipping, which proved worrisome. Although Grand Admiral Erich Raeder, commander of the Kriegsmarine, had not anticipated war before 1944 and was startled that Hitler intended to invade Poland in 1939, his menacing fleet included the super battleships *Bismarck* and *Tirpitz*, the pocket battleships, heavy cruisers, and commerce raiders that imperilled Allied shipping around the world.

However, the Royal Navy had served as Britain's stalwart defender for more than 400 years. In the desperate times of the Battle of the Atlantic and the struggle for supremacy in the Mediterranean against the Nazis and the modern Italian fleet, the spirit and skill of British naval personnel proved indomitable. Later, as the United States Navy joined the fight, their combined resolve brought about the final victory. Both shepherded merchant convoys to Britain and escorted cargo vessels as they ran the desperate gauntlet of German aircraft and U-boats to reach the Russian ports of Murmansk and Archangel to supply the Soviet Union with arms and equipment to fight the Nazis on the Eastern Front.

In the spring of 1941, at the height of the Battle of the Atlantic, the Royal Navy wrote one of the most stirring chapters in the history of warfare. The epic chase and sinking of the *Bismarck* occurred over thousands of square miles of the Atlantic. The chase involved every available surface asset the Royal Navy could muster, and the quarry was not vanquished until after the stinging loss of the battlecruiser HMS *Hood*, pride of the Royal Navy, sunk by the big guns of *Bismarck* and her consort, the heavy cruiser *Prinz Eugen*, in the Denmark Strait days earlier.

In the end, the defeat of *Bismarck* came down to a few intrepid airmen of the Fleet Air Arm pressing home torpedo attacks while flying the obsolete Fairey Swordfish torpedo bomber. The Swordfish was a flying anachronism, made of wood, canvas, and wire and affectionately nicknamed the Stringbag. A single torpedo jammed *Bismarck*'s rudder, and all the great ship could do was turn in a circle and await her fate

ABOVE Crewmen on the bridge of a Royal Navy destroyer keep watch for German U-boats while escorting a convoy in the Atlantic Ocean.

Public Domain

ABOVE The German submarine *U-848* is shown under attack by US aircraft on anti-submarine patrol in the Atlantic in the autumn of 1943. Public Domain

as capital ships of the Royal Navy, the battleships *King George V* and *Rodney*, along with a cluster of cruisers and destroyers closed for the final showdown.

The Swordfish had already proven its remarkable worth as the Royal Navy prevented the Mediterranean from becoming Mussolini's lake with the stirring November 11, 1940 raid on the Italian fleet anchorage at Taranto, damaging three Italian battleships and several other naval vessels.

The Royal Navy again overmatched the Italians, inflicting a stinging defeat at the Battle of Cape Matapan in March 1941, while the saga of the island of Malta and its stalwart people remains one of unparalleled determination. Under siege for many months, the people of the tiny island endured heavy bombing, while the Royal Navy did its utmost to keep them provisioned. Malta-bound convoys were ravaged, but the story of *Operation Pedestal* and the crew of the tanker *Ohio*, delivering precious fuel, is one of sublime bravery. The people of Malta received the George Cross for their steadfastness.

Bismarck's sister, *Tirpitz*, was no less a threat, and the Royal Navy sought vigorously to eliminate it with heavy bombing raids. However, the bravery of the men who attacked the behemoth by sea in a Norwegian fjord is astounding. The sailors manned midget submarines, called X-craft, and managed to inflict substantial damage on *Tirpitz* in June 1943, with explosive charges, crippling the battleship and keeping her in port so that RAF bombers could finish the job with 12,000-pound Tallboy bombs.

By 1944, the Allies had gained the upper hand in the Battle of the Atlantic, and naval hunter-killer groups had turned the tables on the Nazi U-boats. The hunters often became the hunted. And so it was on June 4, when a US Navy task group stalked the *U-505,* brought the Nazi submarine to the surface, and executed the American navy's first boarding of a hostile warship since the War of 1812. *U-505* was taken as a war prize, but not before gallant sailors risked the possibility of booby traps or the submarine's imminent sinking as its scuttling valves had been opened. Charts and codebooks were scooped up, survivors rescued, and the U-boat taken in tow, arriving at Bermuda after a voyage of 1,700 nautical miles.

Those who seek the essence of bravery, heroism and devotion to duty need look no further than to the accounts of Allied navy men during World War Two who held the line against the Axis in the Western seas, wrested the initiative from the enemy, and then finished the fight for mastery of the oceans.

LIEUTENANT ALBERT DAVID

July 18, 1902 – September 17, 1945

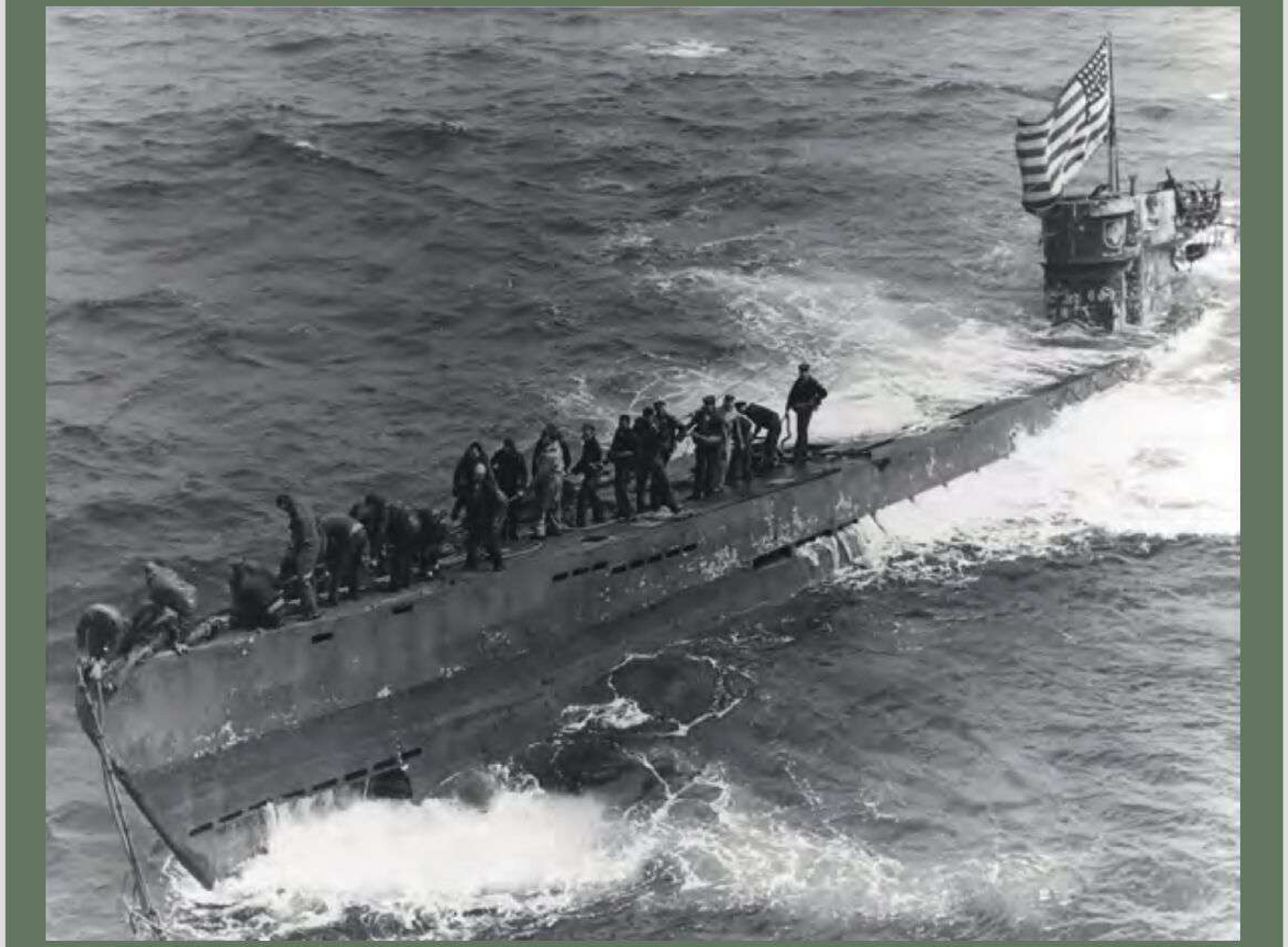
US Navy | Medal of Honor; Navy Cross

ABOVE Lieutenant Albert David led the boarding party that secured the German submarine *U-505* on the high seas. He was recommended for the Medal of Honor. Public Domain

LIEUTENANT ALBERT David was a reservist after nearly 20 years in the US Navy when he was recalled to active duty on September 27, 1939. He served in various posts and was ordered to Orange, Texas, to assist in preparing the new destroyer escort USS *Pillsbury* for sea duty.

Remaining with the new destroyer, which was commissioned on June 7, 1943, David was the ship's assistant engineering and electrical officer during convoy escort duty across the Atlantic to Gibraltar and Casablanca. Assigned to the U-boat hunter-killer group led by the escort aircraft carrier USS *Guadalcanal*, *Pillsbury* participated in the attack and capture of the Nazi submarine *U-505* on June 4, 1944, off Cape Blanco, French West Africa.

After depth charge and anti-submarine Hedgehog attacks forced the damaged submarine to surface, *Pillsbury* lowered a small boat with David and nine other sailors aboard. At the time, *U-505* was still underway, running in a circle, and the possibility that some German sailors remained aboard to scuttle the boat or possibly rig booby traps to deter boarding was very real. David led the men to the U-boat deck, descended to the interior of the U-boat via the conning tower, and found water pouring inside.



ABOVE With the US flag flying from the conning tower of the *U-505*, American sailors attach a towline to the captured German submarine. Public Domain

Amid the immediate peril of sinking or explosion, David remained in control of salvage operations and the stabilisation of the U-boat, directing sailors from *Guadalcanal* that arrived to take *U-505* in tow. The successful boarding of the enemy vessel was the first in the US Navy during wartime since the War of 1812.

David was recommended for the Medal of Honor but died of a heart attack before the medal was presented to him. His widow accepted during a ceremony at the White House on October 5, 1945. David was the only member of the US Navy to receive the Medal of Honor for action in the Atlantic theatre of World War Two.

ABOVE Victoria Cross recipient John Cruickshank stands in front of a Consolidated PBY Catalina flying boat similar to the one he piloted in World War Two. **Alamy Images**

FLIGHT LIEUTENANT JOHN CRUICKSHANK

May 20, 1920 –

Royal Air Force | Victoria Cross

FLIGHT LIEUTENANT John Cruickshank joined the Territorial Army in 1939 and transferred to the Royal Air Force Volunteer Reserve two years later. He received flight training in Canada and the United States and was posted to 210 Squadron at RAF Sullom Voe in Shetland.

Piloting the Consolidated PBY Catalina flying boat, Cruickshank conducted numerous coastal and anti-submarine patrols. On July 17, 1944, he flew northward into the Norwegian Sea to cover Royal Navy warships returning from an unsuccessful raid against the German super battleship *Tirpitz*. The German submarine *U-361* was spotted on the surface west of the Lofoten Islands, and Cruickshank moved to attack.

The U-boat crew was alerted, and its deck gun opened a tremendous fire on the flying boat. Cruickshank made a run through heavy fire, but the plane's depth charges hung up, failing to release. He brought the Catalina around again. This time the depth charges straddled the U-boat, which was manoeuvring violently in an attempt to evade the attack. Within minutes, *U-361* had been sunk. All 52 German crewmen went down with the submarine.

ABOVE A German U-boat shudders while under attack by aircraft of RAF Coastal Command. John Cruickshank sank the *U-361* off the Lofoten Islands. **Public Domain**

However, Cruickshank and four crewmen aboard the Catalina were seriously wounded, and enemy fire had killed the navigator. The co-pilot took control of the plane while Cruickshank's wounds were evaluated. Although in great pain, Cruickshank refused morphine because he was aware that the co-pilot was rather inexperienced and landing a damaged plane in darkness would be quite hazardous.

Arriving over the base at 3am., Cruickshank circled for another hour until landing conditions were more favourable. Upon landing, he was given a blood transfusion and stabilised for transport to hospital. He recovered, but his wounds were serious enough to prevent his return to command of in-flight aircraft. He received the Victoria Cross, and the citation appeared in the September 1, 1944, edition of *The London Gazette*.

Cruickshank celebrated his 101st birthday on May 20, 2021.

CAPTAIN ROBERT EDWARD DUDLEY RYDER

February 16, 1908 – June 29, 1986

Royal Navy | Victoria Cross; French Legion of Honor; Croix de Guerre

OPERATION CHARIOT was an ambitious endeavour, fraught with peril. In other words, it was tailor-made for the intrepid men of the Royal Navy and the soldiers of No. 2 Commando. The mission was hatched to deny a naval base on the Atlantic coast of Nazi-occupied France to the German super battleship *Tirpitz*. With its 15-inch guns, *Tirpitz* was capable of wreaking havoc with Allied merchant shipping; however, the only dry dock on the coast capable of accommodating the battleship if repairs were needed was at the port of St. Nazaire.

The Normandie dock had been constructed originally to accommodate the large French passenger liner Normandie, and the British devised a plan to pack the hull of the obsolete destroyer HMS *Campbeltown* with explosives and ram the floating bomb into the dock so that the ensuing explosion would damage it severely. The officer chosen to lead the mission, code named *Operation Chariot*, was Commander Robert Edward Dudley Ryder, a veteran who had served in the Royal Navy since 1926 and survived the sinking of his Q-ship HMS *Edgehill* 200 miles west of Ireland and the four day ordeal at sea that followed before his rescue.

On March 28, 1942 Ryder led the British force into the harbour at St. Nazaire. Under heavy fire, *Campbeltown* was rammed home into the dry dock. The Commandos also heavily damaged other installations but took significant casualties. Throughout the operation, Ryder remained in

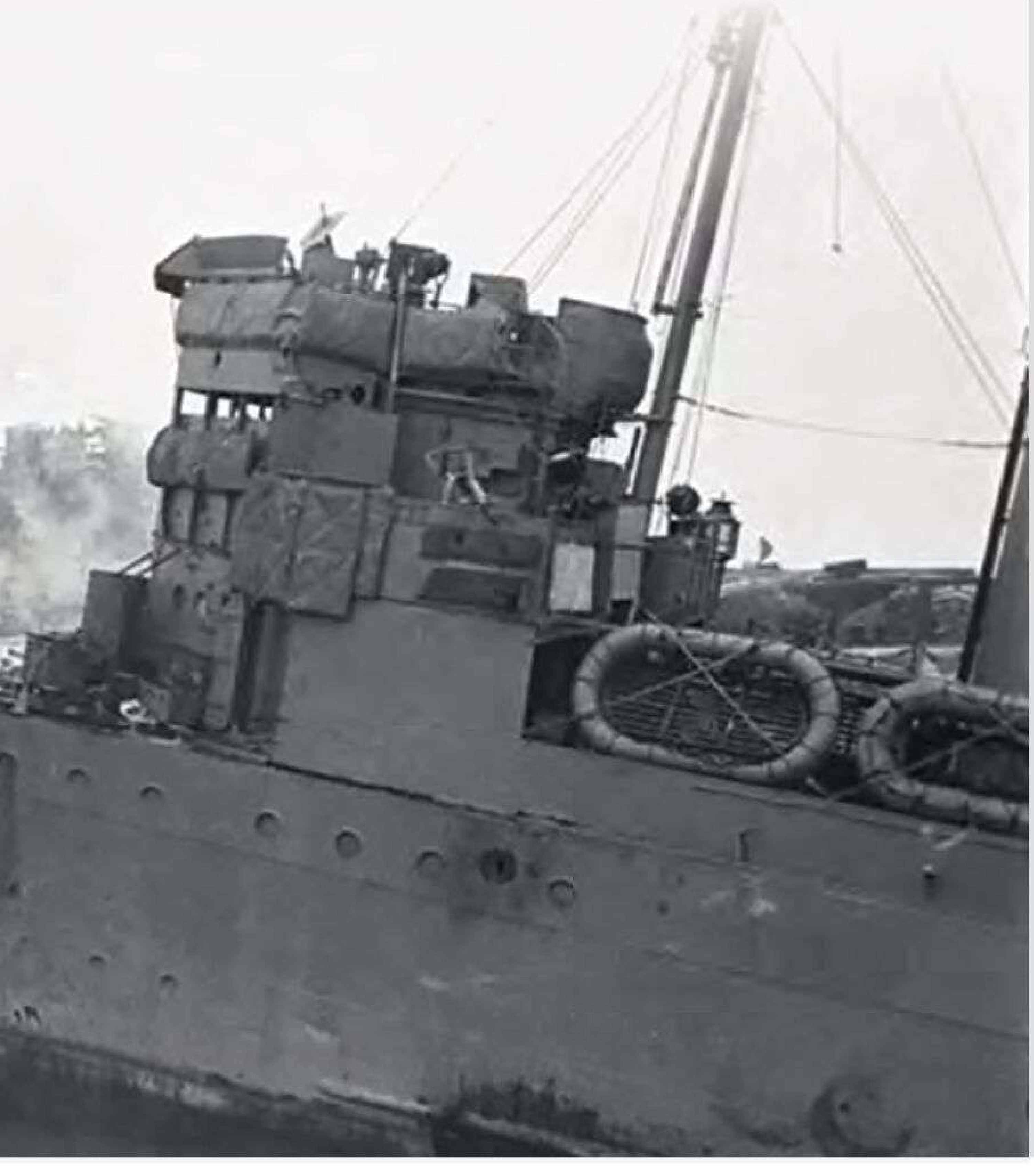
BELOW German soldiers inspect the destroyer HMS *Campbeltown*, wedged into the gate of the Normandie dry dock at St. Nazaire. A short time later, the destroyer exploded. **Creative Commons Bundesarchiv Bild**

ABOVE Lieutenant Commander R.E.D. Ryder led *Operation Chariot*, the heroic raid on the dry dock at the port of St. Nazaire, France, in March 1942. **Public Domain**

command, directing assaults against enemy strongpoints, and recovering wounded aboard his motor gun boat for a full hour and 16 minutes.

Ryder was one of five participants in *Operation Chariot* who received the Victoria Cross. The mission was undertaken by 612 men. Of these, 169 were killed and 215 were taken prisoner by the Germans. *Campbeltown* did not explode immediately. However, as the Germans inspected the wreckage the following day, the old destroyer blew up, killing more than 300 officers and soldiers.

Dudley later took part in the Dieppe Raid in August 1942 and served in the House of Commons after his retirement from the Royal Navy.



LIEUTENANT COMMANDER EUGENE ESMONDE

March 1, 1909 – February 12, 1942

Royal Navy | Victoria Cross; Distinguished Service Order

THE HUNT for the German battleship *Bismarck* was well underway, and the battlecruiser HMS *Hood* had come to grief, when nine Fairey Swordfish torpedo bombers of the Fleet Air Arm took to the sky from the pitching deck of the aircraft carrier HMS *Victorious* on May 24, 1941.

In command of the flight from 825 Naval Air Squadron, Lieutenant Commander Eugene Esmonde led the torpedo planes through terrible weather, 120 miles to the target, the great grey battleship looming distant in gathering darkness. Esmonde held steady as antiaircraft fire buffeted his Swordfish and loosed his torpedo, which struck *Bismarck* amidships on its starboard side. Edmonde received the Distinguished Service Order for the action, which contributed to the final sinking of the enemy battleship days later. A second torpedo hit from a Swordfish flying from the carrier *Ark Royal* finally brought *Bismarck* to heel.

ABOVE Lieutenant Commander Eugene Esmonde stands second from left with crewmen of the Fairey Swordfish that successfully attacked *Bismarck* in May 1941. **Public Domain**

Earlier, Esmonde had been aboard the aircraft carrier HMS *Courageous*, which was sunk in September 1939. After the *Bismarck* chase, he transferred to *Ark Royal* and was present when that carrier was sunk by a U-boat torpedo on November 13, 1941. He was Mentioned in Despatches for ferrying crewmen from the sinking carrier.

On February 12, 1942, the Kriegsmarine executed *Operation Cerberus*, the channel dash of the battlecruisers *Scharnhorst* and *Gneisenau* and the cruiser *Prinz Eugen* from the French port of Brest to the Baltic Sea. Edmonde led Swordfish of 825 Squadron in desperate torpedo runs against these high value targets. However, the enemy antiaircraft fire was so intense that no hits were scored and four of the six Swordfish participating were shot down. Edmonde was killed when his aircraft received a direct hit.

After surviving the sinking of two aircraft carriers and giving his life in action, Esmonde was awarded a posthumous Victoria Cross for gallantry during the channel dash. His award was gazetted on March 3, 1942.

RIGHT The Fairey Swordfish torpedo bomber was obsolescent by 1941, but Lieutenant Commander Eugene Esmonde flew the aircraft bravely in combat. **Public Domain**

FLYING OFFICER LLOYD TRIGG

May 5, 1914 – August 11, 1943

Royal New Zealand Air Force | Victoria Cross; Distinguished Flying Cross

ABOVE Flying Officer Lloyd Trigg sank a German U-boat while flying a Consolidated B-24 Liberator bomber and lost his life in the process. **Public Domain**

THE FIRE from the German U-boat was intense and accurate, shells slamming into the big Consolidated B-24 Liberator bomber. Quickly, smoke and flames erupted as the pilot, Flying Officer Lloyd Trigg, bravely pressed home his attack against *U-468* off the coast of Dakar, French West Africa, on August 11, 1943.

Rather than veering away and attempting to limp back to his base at Yundumn or ditch in the open sea, Trigg dropped six depth charges from an altitude of only 50 feet. Although there may still have been time to turn away after the initial attack, Trigg came around again in his crippled bomber. The astonished German gunners aboard the submarine could see their slow-flying opponent in dire straits while their shells continued to strike home, some even exploding inside the open bomb bay.

The Liberator crashed into the Atlantic, killing Trigg and the entire crew. However, *U-468* had been mortally wounded by the depth charges and sank just 20 minutes later.

ABOVE Sailors aboard the corvette HMS *Clarkia* inspect the dinghy used by U-boat crew following the encounter with Lloyd Trigg's B-24. *Clarkia* rescued the survivors. **Public Domain**

Trigg, a New Zealander, had joined the Royal New Zealand Air Force in June 1941 and earned his pilot's wings along with a commission within six months. He was an experienced pilot at the time of the fateful encounter, having previously been awarded the Distinguished Flying Cross for action against two other U-boats. He had trained and was quite experienced in piloting the Lockheed Hudson bomber, and his 200 Squadron RAF had only recently transitioned to the Liberator. This had been, in fact, his first combat mission at the controls of a B-24.

Among the small group of survivors that scrambled away from the sinking U-486 was its commander, Kapitanleutnant Klemens Schamong. Floating in a dinghy freed from the wreckage of the B-24, the Germans were plucked from the Atlantic by a Royal Navy warship the next day. They told the story of Trigg's attack to their captors and asserted that the pilot should be recognised for bravery.

Trigg was awarded a posthumous Victoria Cross with the unusual circumstance that it was based solely on the account of his adversaries; there were no Commonwealth men alive to bear witness. The Governor General of New Zealand presented the medal to Trigg's widow at the family home on May 28, 1944.

HIS ROYAL HIGHNESS PRINCE PHILIP

June 10, 1921 – April 9, 2021

Royal Navy | Mentioned in Despatches; Greek Cross of Valour

PRIOR TO his emergence as a world figure and the stalwart husband of Her Royal Highness Queen Elizabeth II, Prince Philip was first a hero of the Royal Navy during World War Two.

In keeping with a Mountbatten family tradition, Philip joined the Royal Navy in January 1940, after completing Britannia Royal Naval College, Dartmouth. Months later, he was aboard the battleship HMS *Valiant* in the Mediterranean.

In March 1941, *Valiant* took part in the defeat of an Italian naval force in the Battle of Cape Matapan, and the prince was recognised for skilfully operating one of the battleship's searchlights. He remembered years later, "…Suddenly, in the quiet of the night, came a report from our RDF operator that he had an echo on the port bow at about 5,000 yards…The beam lit up a stationary cruiser…At this point all hell broke loose, as all our 15-inch guns started firing at the stationary cruiser, which disappeared in an explosion and a cloud of smoke…I was then ordered to 'train left' and lit up another Italian cruiser, which was given the same treatment."

The prince was Mentioned in Despatches and received the Greek Cross of Valour for his performance.

In June 1942, Prince Philip transferred to the destroyer HMS *Wallace*. The following summer, the destroyer was detailed in support of the Allied landings in Sicily. Ships lying offshore were vulnerable to Luftwaffe bomber attack, and one night *Wallace* was leading a charmed life. "It was obvious that we were the target for tonight and they would not stop until we had suffered a fatal hit," one sailor remembered.

BELOW The battleship HMS *Valiant* rests at anchor in the Mediterranean. His Royal Highness Prince Philip operated one of the battleship's searchlights at the Battle of Cape Matapan in 1941. **Public Domain**

ABOVE His Royal Highness Prince Philip, pictured in 1945, served aboard the battleship HMS *Valiant* during the Battle of Cape Matapan and the destroyer HMS *Wallace* off Sicily. **Public Domain**

The prince's ingenuity probably saved the destroyer. He supervised the construction of a wooden raft with smoke floats attached. The raft was launched, and when the floats gave off billowing clouds and bursts of flame, the German pilots were convinced that the raft was a stricken warship. They turned their attention on the raft, rather than *Wallace* and dropped their bombs harmlessly into the sea.

The prince's naval service continued until duties with the royal family necessitated retirement in 1951.

ABOVE Lieutenant Donald Cameron, who commanded the midget submarine *X-6* and received the Victoria Cross on the *Tirpitz* mission with Godfrey Place is pictured with his crew. **Public Domain**

LIEUTENANT GODFREY PLACE

July 19, 1921 – December 27, 1994

Royal Navy | Victoria Cross; Companion of the Order of the Bath; Commander of the Royal Victorian Order; Distinguished Service Cross; Polish Cross of Valour; Portuguese Commander of the Military Order of the Aviz

THE MISSION seemed suicidal, at least highly risky, but the Royal Navy men who volunteered to take part were eager to do so. *Operation Source* was a daring raid against the Nazi super battleship *Tirpitz* anchored in Kasfjord, Norway. The raiders were trained in the use of midget submarines known as X-craft, and the plan was to infiltrate the fjord and sink *Tirpitz* with explosive charges.

On September 22, 1943 four X-craft attempted to enter the fjord. *X-10* was abandoned due to mechanical failure; *X-5* was destroyed by German fire about 500 yards from *Tirpitz*; and *X-6* was experiencing mechanical malfunction when spotted by the Germans and rammed the enemy battleship. *X-7*, under the command of Lieutenant Godfrey Place, had snared a mine en route to Kasfjord, but Place was able to climb out of the midget sub and kick it loose. Once inside the fjord, *X-7* became tangled in anti-submarine netting but managed to clear the obstacle before slamming into *Tirpitz* and then gliding beneath the big warship. Place released two mines that drifted below the keel.

Seconds later, *X-7* was again entangled in the anti-torpedo netting. The charges were set to explode momentarily. However, the detonation of a charge released from *X-6* blew *X-7* free of the entanglement. The explosions inflicted heavy damage on *Tirpitz*, which remained in the fjord for months undergoing extensive repairs.

Place brought *X-7* to the surface as the supply of air was running out. Along with Lieutenant Donald Cameron, commander of *X-6*, he was one of six raiders taken prisoner. Both Place and Cameron received the Victoria Cross. Their citations were published in the February 18, 1944, edition of *The London Gazette*.

At the time of *Operation Source*, Place had already received the Polish Cross of Valour for service as a liaison officer aboard a Polish submarine and the Distinguished Service Cross for the sinking of the Italian submarine Guglielmotti while aboard the submarine HMS *Unbeaten*.

After World War Two, Place remained in the Royal Navy, transferring to the Fleet Air Arm. He flew combat missions in the Sea Fury fighter bomber during the Korean War and retired in 1970 with the rank of rear admiral.

ABOVE Lieutenant Godfrey Place commanded the midget submarine *X-7* during the 1943 attack on the German battleship *Tirpitz* and received the Victoria Cross. **Public Domain**

MERCHANT NAVY MASTER DUDLEY MASON

October 7, 1901 – April 26, 1987

British Merchant Navy | George Cross; Lloyd's War Medal for Bravery at Sea

ABOVE Master Dudley Mason commanded the tanker *Ohio* during the hazardous *Operation Pedestal* convoy transit to the island of Malta. **Public Domain**

THE 14,000-ton Texas Oil Company tanker *Ohio* was filled with fuel for the beleaguered island of Malta, strategically situated in the Mediterranean Sea halfway between Italy and North Africa. On loan to the British Ministry of War Transport since early 1942, the big ship was crewed by British merchant sailors, and her master was Dudley William Mason, who had gone to sea as an apprentice more than 20 years earlier.

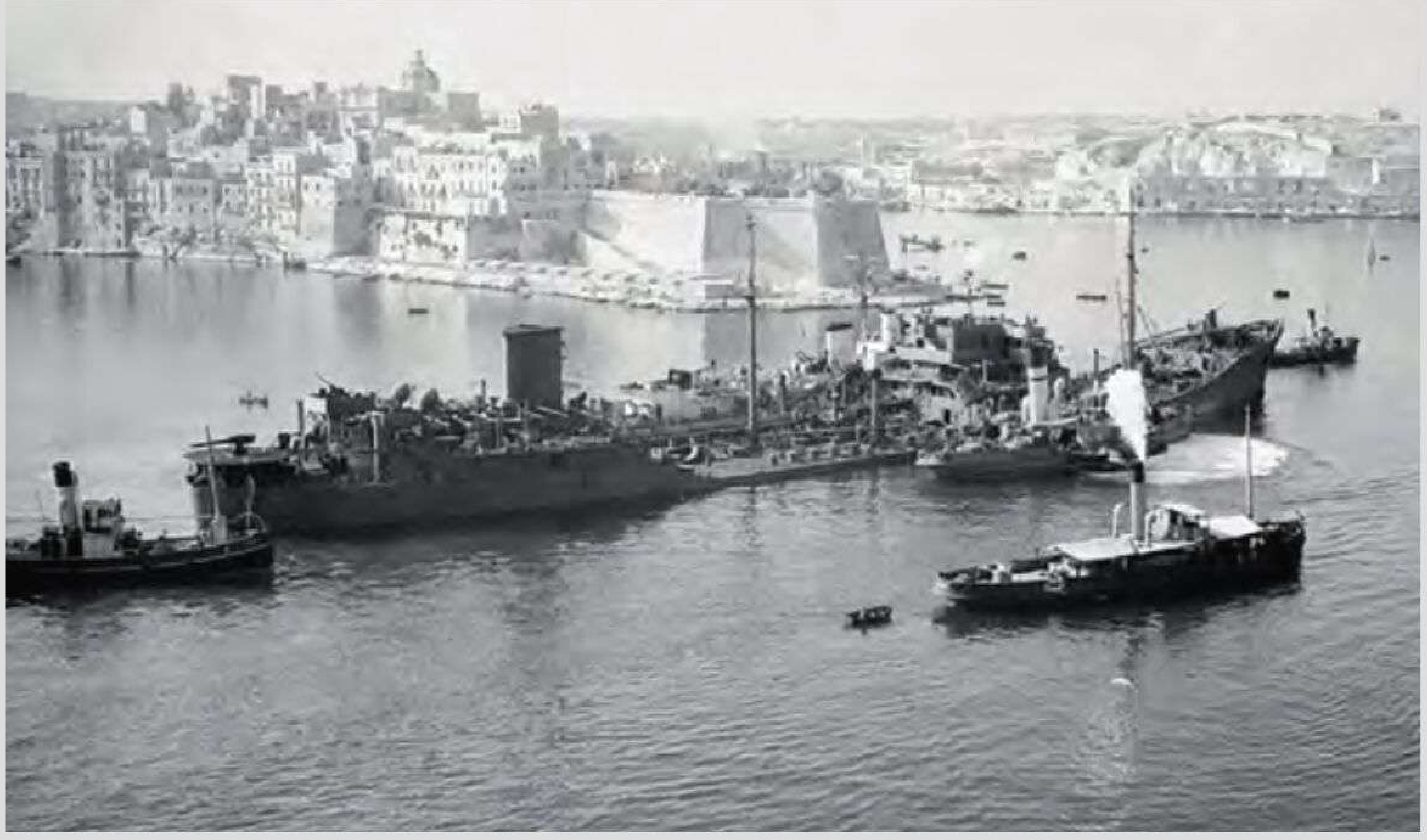
In August 1942, *Operation Pedestal* got underway. It was a near-run thing as the convoy set out from Britain for Malta carrying critical supplies that were necessary for the island to hold out against incessant Axis air attacks that threatened to strangle the flow of supplies and bomb the British base into submission. As long as Malta held out, it would be a thorn in the side of General Erwin Rommel, whose Panzerarmee Afrika was fighting in North Africa. From Malta, Royal Navy submarines and aircraft could attack German convoys bringing reinforcements and war materiel to Rommel.

The people of Malta endured, and the Pedestal convoy was critical to that continuing endurance. *Ohio* became a prime focus of the Axis attempts to destroy the Pedestal convoy before it reached Malta. The convoy and its escort were ravaged.

Under the able command of Master Mason, *Ohio* survived a terrible onslaught of German and Italian air raids, becoming their primary target. En route to the embattled island, *Ohio* sustained a torpedo hit, as well as multiple bomb hits that even lifted the big ship out of the water momentarily and extensively damaged its boiler room. One German Ju-87 Stuka dive bomber actually crashed into *Ohio*'s deck. The tanker's keel was broken, and it was abandoned and reboarded twice during those epic four days.

Finally, on August 15, *Ohio* reached Malta's Valetta harbour. In imminent danger of foundering, the tanker had been lashed between the Royal Navy destroyers Ledbury and Penn just to stay afloat. After the last of the kerosene and diesel fuel were pumped from its hold, *Ohio* settled upright on the bottom of the harbour.

Master Mason displayed extreme calm and courage throughout the ordeal. Other crewmen were recognised for heroism as well, including seven Distinguished Service Medals, Five Distinguished Service Crosses, and an award of the Distinguished Service Order.



ABOVE The heavily damaged tanker *Ohio* makes harbour in Malta on August 15, 1942 assisted by Royal Navy destroyers. **Public Domain**

LIEUTENANT IAN MCGEOCH

March 26, 1914
– August 12, 2007

Royal Navy | Knight Commander Order of the Bath; Distinguished Service Order; Distinguished Service Cross

THE WATERS of the Tyrrhenian Sea were clear and calm on April 21, 1943, and there was no place for the submarine HMS *Splendid* to hide. On its sixth war patrol out of Malta, the submarine was depth charged and sunk by the German destroyer Hermes.

The submarine's periscope had been spotted, and the destroyer rushed in to drop three depth charge patterns, forcing *Splendid* to the surface. Eighteen men were killed, and 30 survivors plucked from the sea. Among the survivors was Lieutenant Ian McGeoch, the submarine's commander, seriously wounded in his right eye.

McGeoch remained a prisoner of war in Fascist Italy until September 1943, although several escape attempts were foiled. When he was freed, McGeoch travelled to Switzerland, and surgery to remove a metal fragment failed to restore sight in the wounded eye. He made his way back to Britain after crossing southern France and a brief internment in Spain.

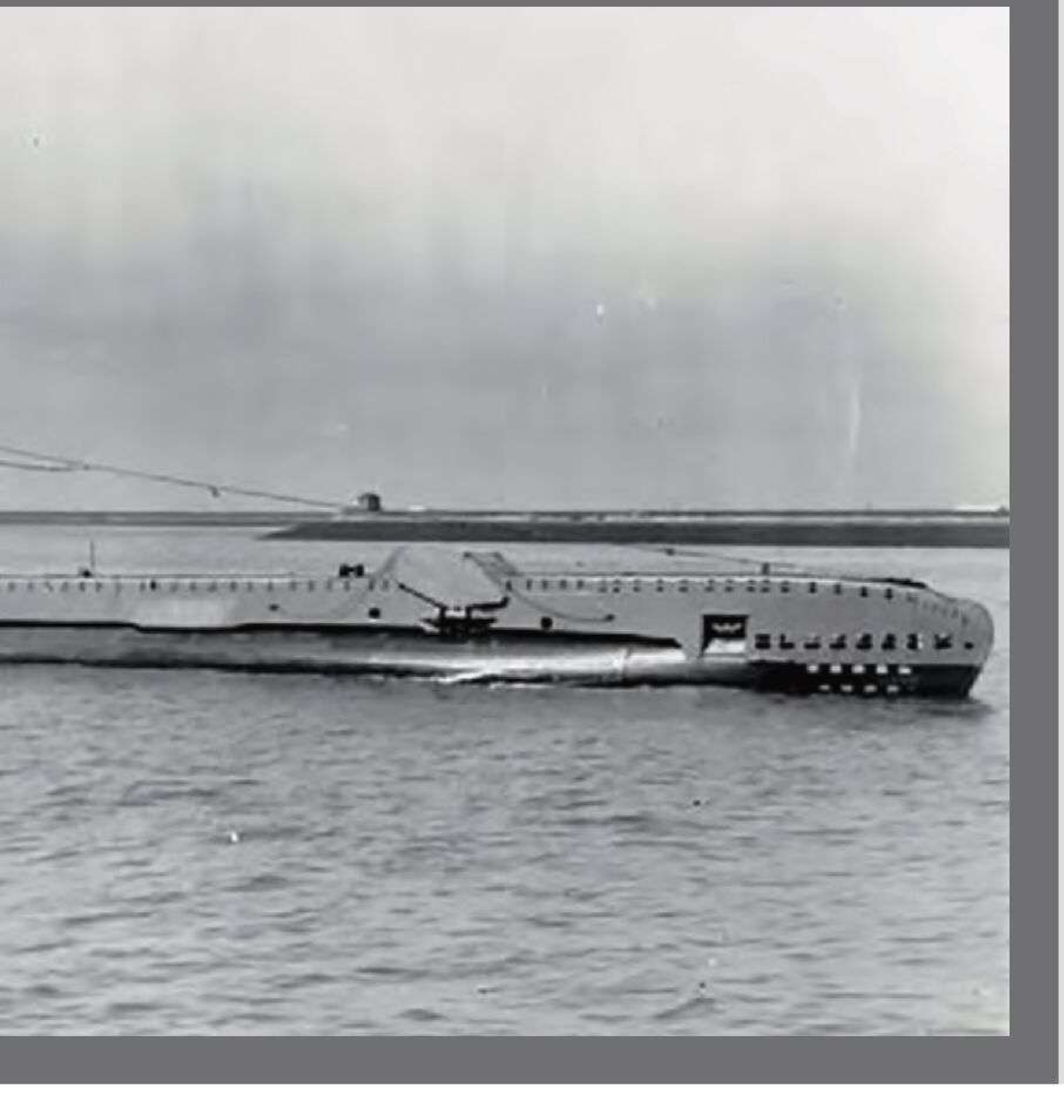
The lieutenant's escape was worthy of a suspense novel, and the record compiled aboard *Splendid* prior to the unfortunate day the submarine was lost stands out among the exploits of Royal Navy submarine crews

ABOVE The Royal Navy submarine HMS *Splendid* is shown in August 1942, just days after its launch. *Splendid* and Lieutenant Ian McGeoch compiled an impressive record before the submarine was lost.

ABOVE The crew of the submarine HMS *Splendid* stand aboard in this photograph taken in February 1943 at the North African port of Algiers. **Public Domain**

during World War Two. During its six war patrols, deploying from Gibraltar and Malta, *Splendid* sank more than 25,000 gross registered tons of enemy shipping, including an Italian destroyer. He received the Distinguished Service Order after his third and fourth patrols, having sunk 19,000 tons of merchant shipping, the destroyer, and two anti-submarine ships. After his fifth patrol, sinking a pair of tankers, McGeoch received the Distinguished Service Cross.

McGeoch remained active in the Royal Navy after World War Two, commanding a destroyer and cruiser and holding several administrative posts, including flag officer submarines. During his tenure in this post, HMS Valiant, the Royal Navy's second nuclear attack submarine, was launched. McGeoch retired in 1970 with the rank of vice admiral.

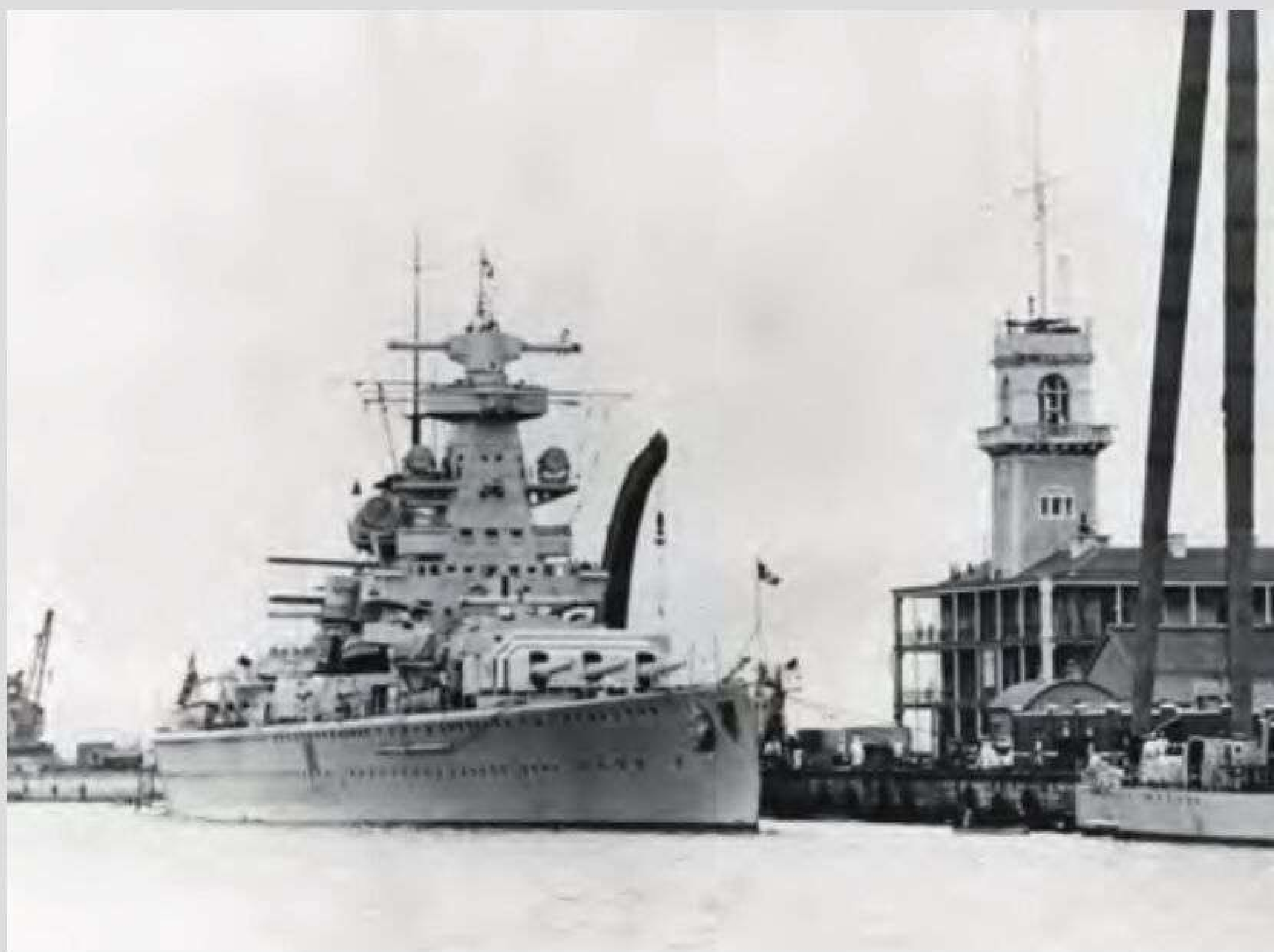


CAPTAIN EDWARD FEGEN

October 8, 1891 – November 5, 1940

Royal Navy | Victoria Cross; Sea Gallantry Medal

HX84, LIKE so many other trans-Atlantic convoys, was en route to Great Britain with vital cargo. Thirty-seven merchant ships had departed Halifax, Nova Scotia, bound for Liverpool across the treacherous wartime sea. The HX84 escort included two Royal Navy destroyers and the armed merchant cruiser *Jervis Bay*, under the command of Captain Edward Fegen, a veteran of World War One already decorated for bravery in daring rescues at sea between the wars.



ABOVE In this pre-war photo from 1936, the sleek Nazi pocket battleship *Admiral Scheer*, with 11-inch main armament, pays a port call at the British bastion of Gibraltar. **Public Domain**

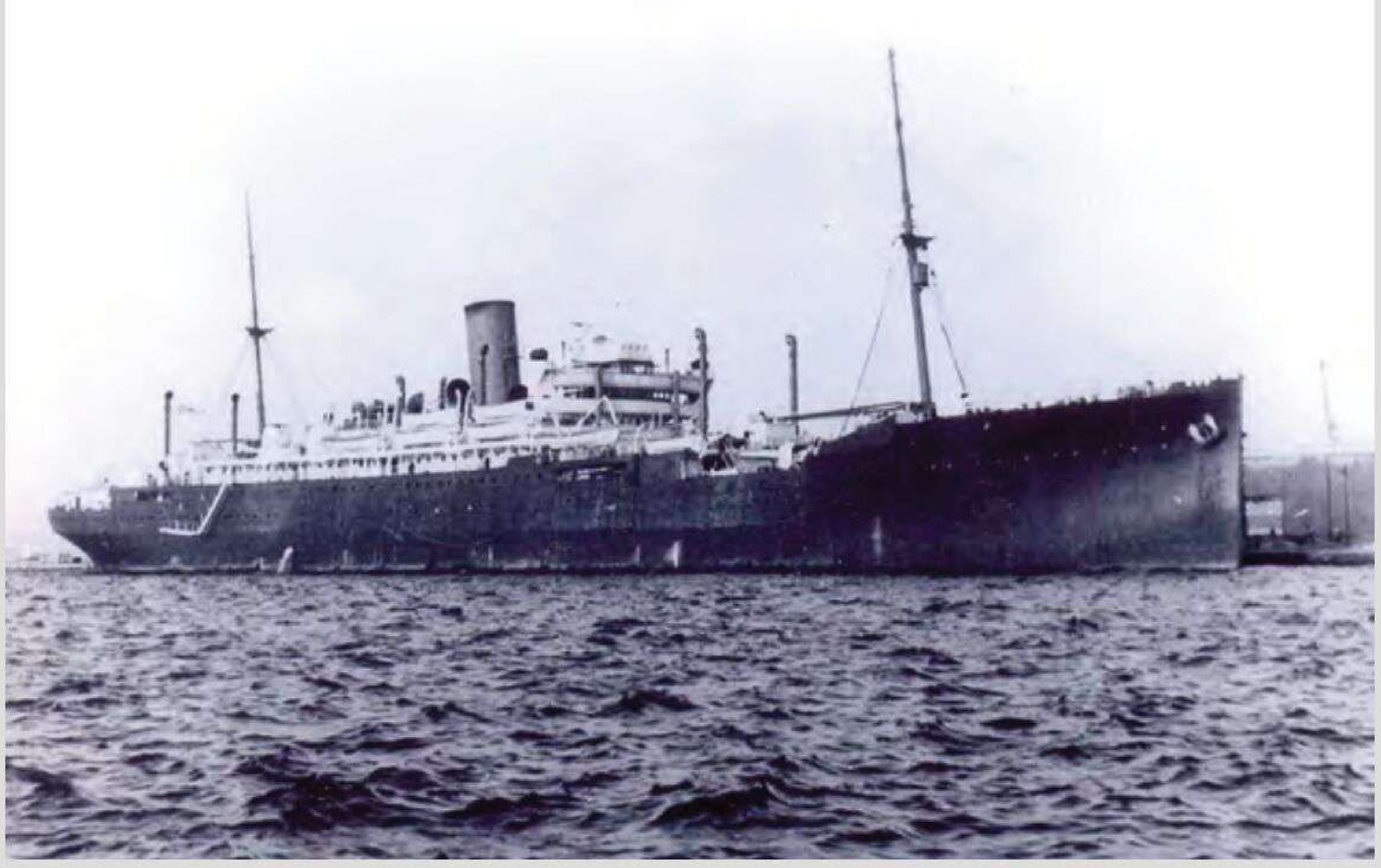
As dusk began to settle on the Atlantic on November 5, 1940 the silhouette of a warship was spotted, and Captain Fegen engaged – buying precious time to allow the convoy to scatter. The 49-year-old Fegen knew that the approaching warship was German, and indeed the pocket battleship *Admiral Scheer*, mounting big 11-inch guns, was closing. In contrast, little *Jervis Bay* carried a main armament of 6-inch guns.

Nevertheless, the escort fought gamely, occupying the German surface raider for more than 20 minutes as the merchantmen sought to escape. Swiftly, German fire had set the escort's bridge ablaze. Fegen's arm was shattered, and repeated hits disabled steering, range finding, and fire control. *Jervis Bay*'s white ensign was shot from its mast, but an intrepid crewman nailed it back in place. When the bridge was utterly destroyed, Fegen died at his post. Sixty-eight men of the armed merchant cruiser's complement of 254 survived the battle, and three men died after being rescued.

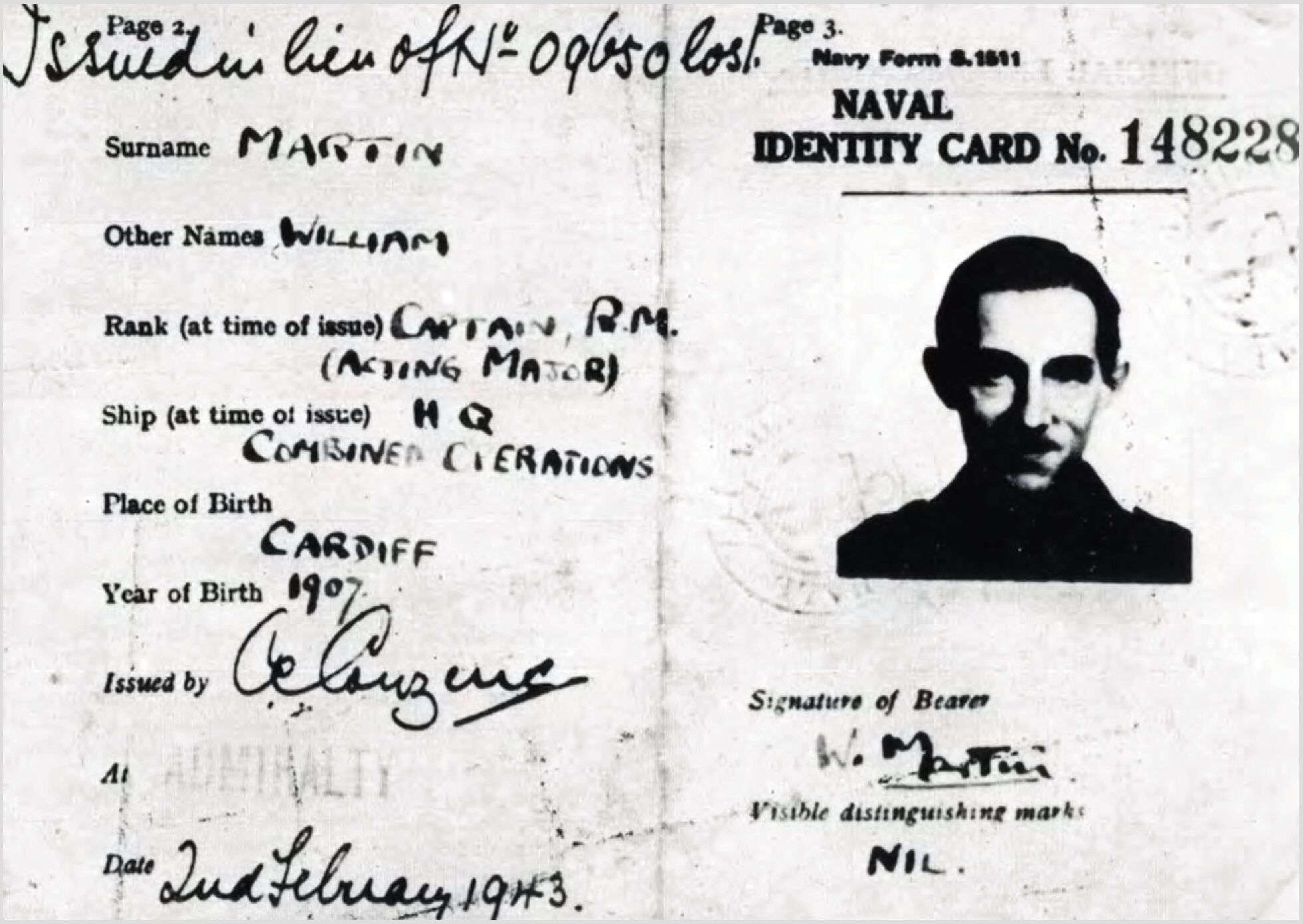
The heroic stand of Fegen and *Jervis Bay* allowed most of HX84 to evade the clutches of *Admiral Scheer*. In the end, the pocket battleship sank only five of the merchantmen, and 31 slipped away.

Fegen received a posthumous Victoria Cross for the David versus Goliath engagement, and his citation, published in the November 22, 1940 edition of *The London Gazette*, reads in part: "…Sighting a powerful German warship he at once drew clear of the Convoy, made straight for the Enemy, and brought his ship between the Raider and her prey…."

What more, then, may be asked of a true seafaring warrior?



ABOVE Shown off the coast of Dakar, Senegal, in 1940, the armed merchant cruiser *Jervis Bay* defended Convoy HX84 in the Atlantic against the German pocket battleship *Admiral Scheer*. **Public Domain**



Page 2. Issued in lieu of No 09650 lost.

Surname MARTIN

Other Names WILLIAM

Rank (at time of issue) CAPTAIN, R.M.
(ACTING MAJOR)

Ship (at time of issue) H Q
COMBINED OPERATIONS

Place of Birth
CARDIFF

Year of Birth 1907

Issued by

At ADMIRALTY

Date 2nd February 1943.

Page 3.
Navy Form S.1511
NAVAL
IDENTITY CARD No. 148228

Signature of Bearer
W. Martin

Visible distinguishing marks
NIL.

SPIES AND SPECIAL OPERATIONS

1935 - 1945

A SPANISH FISHERMAN pulled the body from the water, and soon the authorities were on the scene. The British Army officer had apparently been killed in a plane crash somewhere in the Bay of Biscay, and the tides had brought the corpse of the unfortunate fellow to the shores of neutral Spain.

Neutrality during World War Two, however, was something of a relative term. The Spanish government, Fascist and dominated by Generalissimo Francisco Franco, was pro-Nazi in its political leanings. After all, Adolf Hitler had sent troops, tanks, and aircraft to fight with Franco's Nationalists in their seizure of power during the Spanish Civil War of the mid-1930s. It was logical, therefore, to assume that the Spanish would share any gleanings of intelligence they came across with their German friends.

And they did.

The rest of the story is startling. It all worked just as planned – by British Naval Intelligence and MI5, the nation's domestic counter-intelligence and security agency. The Spanish relayed their intelligence coup to the Germans, who gratefully accepted the plausibility of the story and fell for a clever ruse, hook, line, and sinker, as they say.

The deceased Major Martin, whose body was recovered, carried chained to his wrist an attaché case filled with a trove of top secret documents related to the Allied offensive move that would follow their victory in North Africa. The real focus of Allied attention was the island of Sicily. But the documents entrusted to the deceased Major Martin pointed to Greece. German military planners responded accordingly, reinforcing their troop strength in the Balkans, and augmenting coastal defences that – as it turned out – would never fire a shot in anger. When Allied troops landed in Sicily in the summer of 1943, *Operation Husky* faced weaker resistance. A battlefield triumph was achieved in part because of a fantastic covert operation.

In truth, there was no Major Martin. His identity, life and loves, record of past due bills, and his military career were all works of fiction. The dead man was actually a homeless London vagrant, and the masterminds of the deception had conducted an extensive search for just the right corpse. Then, a life was built around it. Attention to detail was meticulous, right down to the contents of the unfortunate major's pockets, the wear of his uniform, and even the brand of undergarment he wore. Fake letters and receipts, a statement from a London jeweller, and a photograph of the officer's fiancée, Pam, actually an MI5 secretary named Nancy Jean Leslie, were manufactured. Major Martin, therefore, became the 'Man Who Never Was'.

Inventive Lieutenant Commander Ewen Montagu, a Cambridge and Harvard-educated attorney during peacetime represented Naval Intelligence on the famed XX Committee that developed the successful spy-counter spy Double Cross system. He, and Flight Lieutenant Charles Cholmondeley, of the Royal Air Force Intelligence and Security Department, detailed to MI5 and the XX Committee, made the effort, dubbed *Operation Mincemeat* happen. And their project came together primarily in the shadows of dank Room 13, a stuffy basement area beneath the Admiralty building in Whitehall.

Operation Mincemeat was a shining example of Allied ingenuity. Practiced in the art of deception, British intelligence services quite simply helped to win the war. The American Office of Strategic Services (OSS), forerunner of the modern Central Intelligence Agency (CIA), was also active, as were many other clandestine organisations dedicated to covert operations in Europe during World War Two.

Then, there were those who took up arms, British, American, and other nationals, accepting the risks of special operations in Nazi-occupied territory. There were the spies, who worked under Nazi noses to gather intelligence and to deceive the enemy. These individuals wrote their own significant chapters in the history of the great conflict, and in some cases their heroism remained cloaked in a code of silence and unknown to the world outside the intelligence community, all for the sake of national security lest their stories reveal classified information.

These men and women worked in the shadows, communicating with the resistance in Europe by radio, planning and executing the insertion of agents and special operations personnel, organising air drops of supplies and materiel. They kept suspected Axis spies under surveillance, then took them into custody and 'turned' them into double agents to feed false information to the Abwehr, German Intelligence, convincing the enemy to accept their false reports as genuine.

From the mundane to the magnificent, these imaginative individuals even convinced the German high command that the D-Day invasion would come at the Pas-de-Calais rather than Normandy, led by General George S. Patton who was actually side-lined, and that it would be executed in part by the fictitious First US Army Group, FUSAG, which existed only on paper and in false radio traffic and decoy tanks and trucks.

Today, more than 80 years after World War Two began, the fascinating sagas of espionage, spy versus spy, resistance, commandos, and special forces strikes, are fascinating to explore. These individuals are but a few of the many who made the day of victory possible. They undertook the most hazardous missions, spine tingling for those who have later learned of their exploits.

ABOVE Dummy Sherman tanks such as this example, made of rubber and inflated with air, provided a masterful deception prior to the Allied landings in Normandy on June 6, 1944. **Public Domain**

LEAD PICTURE The false identity card of Major Martin, central figure of *Operation Mincemeat*. The corpse was later identified as actually that of the unfortunate Glyndwr Michael. **Public Domain**

ABOVE SAS commander Lieutenant Colonel David Stirling talks with another SAS officer following a raid in the North African desert. **Public Domain**

LIEUTENANT COLONEL DAVID STIRLING

November 15, 1915 – November 4, 1990

British Army | Knight Bachelor Distinguished Service Order; Officer of the Order of the British Empire

ABOVE Major (later lieutenant colonel) David Stirling led the Special Air Service (SAS) in daring raids until his capture in 1943. **Public Domain**

THEY ATTACKED swiftly, without warning, and then as quickly as they had wreaked havoc, they melted into the desert night. The legendary Special Air Service (SAS) was actually most famous for its lightning-quick raids while riding in Jeeps, machine guns blazing, rather than insertion by aircraft.

The SAS was the brainchild of a young British Army officer, Major David Stirling, the Scottish-born son of a brigadier. Stirling was adventurous, and after serving in the Middle East and the fighting on Crete, he developed an idea for hard-hitting strikes against enemy installations and airfields across the desert of North Africa. He took his plan for a strike force straight to the top and received authorisation to form L Detachment, Special Air Service Brigade, from General Claude Auchinleck, commander of British and Commonwealth forces in the Middle East.

The SAS survived its first mission, a disastrous parachute assault on a German airfield in November 1941. Thirty-four of the 55 participants were killed, wounded, or taken prisoner. Afterward, Stirling opted for the use of the Jeeps and a land approach rather than parachute operations. With this method, the SAS excelled. And Stirling often led from the front. In June 1942, the first such SAS mission was undertaken against three Axis airfields. A month later, the SAS men mounted 18 Jeeps to assault a German airfield at Sidi Haneish in Egypt. Thirty-seven aircraft were destroyed on the ground, and only one SAS team member was killed.

The SAS proved a thorn in the side of the Axis forces in North Africa, and General Erwin Rommel, called their leader the 'Phantom Major'. Stirling was the soul of the SAS but was taken prisoner by the Germans in 1943. He remained a constant irritant, escaping on several occasions before being sent to the infamous Colditz Castle in August 1944. After his capture, the SAS continued to operate. Under Stirling's leadership, the unit is believed to have destroyed at least 250 Axis aircraft along with huge quantities of supplies and materiel.

MAJOR ANDERS LASSEN

September 22, 1920 –
April 9, 1945

British Army | Victoria Cross; Military Cross with two bars

ANDERS LASSEN

ABOVE Major Anders Lassen was a fearsome warrior, who participated in daring Special Boat Service raids during World War Two. This bust is located at the Museum of Danish Resistance in Copenhagen. **Public Domain**

THE RAID by Commandos of the Special Boat Section (SBS) was reaching its climax, and heavy German fire still made movements hazardous. Major Anders Lassen advanced toward a troublesome enemy position still actively resisting. He attacked with grenades and soon heard the occupants cry, "Kamerad!"

Lassen approached to a mere three or four yards and yelled to the Germans inside the bunker to come out. Just then, a burst of machine gun fire rippled from his left and the heroic officer fell mortally wounded. Even then, he tossed another hand grenade into the position and refused to be evacuated while his men, enraged at the apparent treachery, exacted their revenge prior to withdrawal.

ABOVE A member of an SBS team sharpens a knife prior to an operation in the Aegean Sea in 1944. **Public Domain**

The incident took place at Lake Comacchio in the waning days of the Italian campaign during World War Two, and Lassen had exhibited personal courage that made him the only fighting man of the conflict to receive the Victoria Cross who was not a soldier of the British or Commonwealth forces.

Lassen, a 24-year-old Dane, had made his way to Britain while serving in the merchant marine after his country was overrun by the Nazis in 1940. He joined No. 62 Commando and was commissioned an officer immediately after participating in a raid that captured three Axis ships, an action in which he earned the Military Cross. He subsequently joined the SBS and participated in operations throughout the Mediterranean, the Balkans, and in northwest Europe. He received two bars to the Military Cross and notably led an SBS force in a raid on the island of Santorini in the Aegean Sea, destroying radio installations.

On the night of April 8, 1945, Lassen and 17 others raided enemy positions on the north shore of Lake Comacchio. Little reconnaissance had been possible prior to the mission, and German sentries opened fire as the raiders traversed a narrow road with deep water on either side. Lassen rushed forward, killing four Germans, and knocking out their machine gun. He then sprinted nearly 300 yards ahead, throwing grenades at another machine gun nest until the enemy was overrun. The raiders then silenced two more machine guns before Lassen was struck down. His posthumous Victoria Cross citation appeared in *The London Gazette* on September 4, 1945.

COLONEL PETER ORTIZ

July 5, 1913 – May 16, 1988

US Marine Corps | Navy Cross; Legion of Merit; Purple Heart; Order of the British Empire; French Legion of Honor; Military Medal; Croix de Guerre

COLONEL PETER Ortiz began his military career in the French Foreign Legion and went on during World War Two to enlist in the US Marine Corps and become the most highly decorated member of the Office of Strategic Services (OSS).

Ortiz was born in New York and dropped out of college to join the Foreign Legion in 1932. He was captured by the Germans during the Battle of France in 1940 but escaped, making his way back to the United States where he was commissioned in the Marines in the summer of 1942. His prior experience in North Africa and knowledge of foreign languages led to an assignment to the OSS, working there in cooperation with the British Special Operations Executive.

Participating in a series of sensitive missions behind enemy lines in North Africa, Ortiz was seriously wounded. He was later detailed to the Jedburghs, a colourful group of covert operators that were inserted behind enemy lines in small numbers to wreak havoc. His first Jedburgh mission, Union I, was indeed memorable.

On January 6, 1944 Ortiz parachuted into the Haute-Savoie region of occupied France. He is said to have regularly worn his Marine uniform even during operations behind enemy lines. Helping to organise the Maquis resistance effort,

ABOVE Jedburgh operatives receive instructions in a London apartment prior to their departure for a mission in 1944. Public Domain

RIGHT Colonel Peter Ortiz became larger than life while fighting the Nazis as an officer of the U.S. Marine Corps and OSS agent. Public Domain

he once raided a German military installation, stealing 10 vehicles and obtaining a Gestapo pass.

On one memorable occasion, Ortiz, with a flair for the theatrical having worked for a time in Hollywood, was believed to have confronted a group of German officers in a French bar. Dressed in civilian clothes and sitting nearby, he heard the Germans curse the 'tall American Marine'. Ortiz left the bar, put on his Marine uniform at his safe house, and returned with a pistol hidden under his raincoat.

Ortiz ordered drinks for the Germans and then threw the raincoat aside, revealing his Marine uniform. At the point of his .45, he ordered a toast to President Franklin D. Roosevelt and then to the Marine Corps. Ortiz later said that he escaped, leaving the Germans stunned rather than killing them. He wanted the story to spread among the enemy.

Ortiz was captured during *Operation Union II*, spent the rest of the war as a POW, and then returned to his Hollywood career.

VIOLETTE SZABO

June 26, 1921 – February 5, 1945

Special Operations Executive | George Cross; Croix de Guerre; Resistance Medal

ABOVE Violette Szabo undertook two hazardous missions into Nazi-occupied France for the SOE. She was captured, tortured, and executed. Public Domain

VIOLETTE SZABO was born in Paris, the daughter of a British army veteran and a seamstress. She was working in a department store when World War Two broke out and joined the Women's Land Army in 1940 and then the Auxiliary Territorial Services the following year, training to serve with an antiaircraft gun crew.

She married Etienne Szabo, an officer of the French Foreign Legion, and in October 1942, four months after the birth of their daughter, Etienne was killed in action in North Africa. The circumstances surrounding Violette's recruitment into the Special Operations Executive are sketchy; she trained at the SOE school in Beaulieu, Hampshire.

On April 5, 1944, Violette undertook her first mission into occupied France. Her task was to assist in re-establishing a resistance network in the vicinity of the city of Rouen, which the Nazis had compromised with several arrests. Using the code name 'Louise', she worked as a courier for the local leader under the guise of a secretary named Corinne Leroy. She returned to Britain in late April, making a hazardous flight in a Westland Lysander aircraft that was hit by anti-aircraft fire.

Violette's second mission to occupied France began on June 7, 1944. Accompanied by two other SOE agents, she parachuted into the southwest of the country near Limoges with the task of establishing a new resistance network.

On June 10, she was traveling in a car with two resistance fighters when they encountered an unexpected German roadblock. When they stopped, one of the fighters was able to escape; however, Violette and the other fighter fired their weapons and fled on foot. Some accounts relate that the pair reached the top of a hill, but Violette twisted her ankle and was unable to continue. She provided covering fire for the other fighter, killing, or wounding several Germans, but was arrested. Other accounts say that the story is erroneous. German records do not indicate any casualties.

Violette was turned over to the SD, Reich Security Service in Limoges and interrogated for four days. She was transferred to Paris and then to Ravensbrück concentration camp, where she was executed in early February 1945.

ABOVE Westland Lysander aircraft such as these were often used for clandestine missions, delivering and extricating SOE operatives from Nazi-occupied territory. Public Domain

MOE BERG

March 2, 1902 – May 29, 1972

Office of Strategic Services
| Presidential Medal of Freedom

MOE BERG was a baseball player, but as professionals go, his career was mediocre at best. He made the rosters of the Cleveland Indians, Washington Senators, and Boston Red Sox among others. He coached for a couple of years but retired from baseball in 1939.

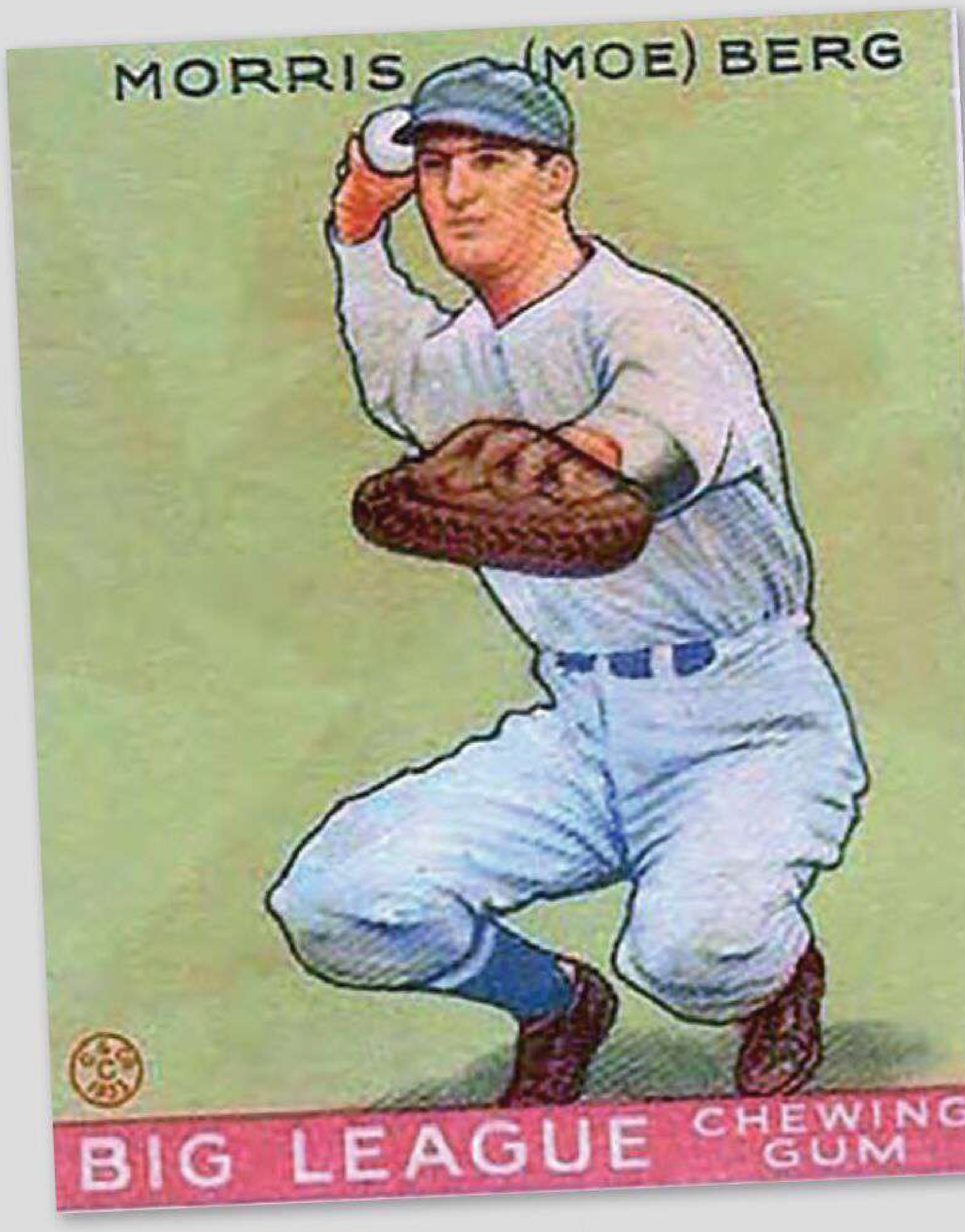
From there, Berg sought to contribute to the Allied war effort. He had already been involved somewhat. While visiting Japan with a group of well-known baseball players who were to compete in exhibitions during the mid-1930s, he went to the tallest building in Tokyo and filmed expansive views of the Japanese capital city with his 16mm Bell & Howell movie camera.

When the US entered World War Two, Berg was offered a position with the Office of the Coordinator of Inter-American Affairs. In the summer of 1942, he showed his film of Tokyo to intelligence officers, providing some possibly valuable information on targets for future bombing raids against the city.

In 1943, Berg was recruited by the OSS to work on Project Larson, an extension of the Alsos Mission involving interviews with Italian physicists to glean any available information regarding the progress of the German programme to develop the atomic bomb. No relevant information was obtained, but late in 1944 the OSS learned that Werner Heisenberg, a prominent German physicist, was giving a lecture in Zurich, Switzerland. Berg attended the lecture with a loaded pistol, having been instructed to kill Heisenberg if he indicated any work on the atomic bomb was taking place.

Through OSS and diplomatic contacts, Berg arranged to have dinner with Heisenberg. Again, no information was revealed.

Berg worked briefly for the CIA in the 1950s, hoping that his former World War Two contacts in Europe might help produce information on the atomic bomb programme in the Soviet Union. Little valuable intelligence was gained.



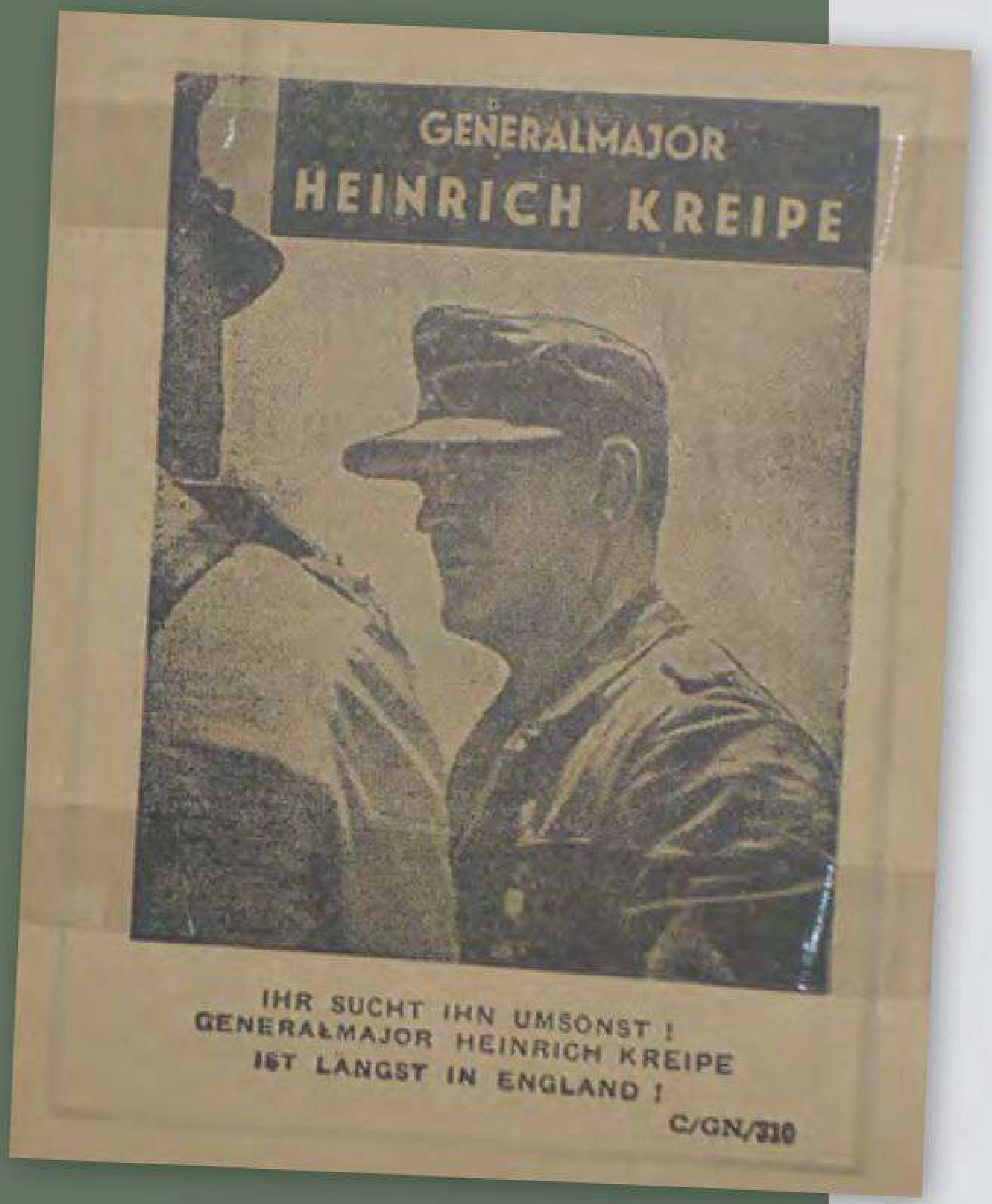
ABOVE Moe Berg, an average professional baseball player, worked for the US Office of Strategic Services during World War Two. **Public Domain**

ABOVE Greek resistance fighters are shown in 1944. Others like them assisted Patrick Leigh Fermor of the SOE in kidnapping a German general in Crete. **Public Domain**

PATRICK LEIGH FERMOR

February 11, 1915 –June 10, 2011

British Army | Distinguished Service Order; Officer of the Order of the British Empire



ABOVE This British propaganda leaflet was distributed across Crete to demoralise the Germans as they searched for kidnapped General Heinrich Kreipe. **Public Domain**

PATRICK LEIGH Fermor was a well-known world traveller and author. At the age of 18, he gained fame walking the length of continental Europe, from the Netherlands to Istanbul, Turkey. *A Time of Gifts*, published in 1977, is one of his most famous books.

During World War Two, Fermor enlisted in the British Army as an officer cadet and then joined the Irish Guards. He was fluent in several languages, and his knowledge of modern Greek brought a posting as a liaison officer in Albania, and he fought the German invaders in Crete and on the Greek mainland, evacuating as the country fell to the Nazis.

During the course of World War Two, Fermor returned to Crete three times as an SOE agent, parachuting into the occupied territory once. He assumed a leading role in establishing the anti-Nazi resistance on the island. He lived undiscovered in the mountains and countryside for two years, using the false identity of 'Michalis' or 'Filedem', a shepherd.

In February 1944, Fermor organised a plot to kidnap General Heinrich Kreipe, commander of the German garrison on Crete. On the night of April 26, 1944, Kreipe's staff car was stopped as it travelled along a dark road. The general was bound and gagged and placed in the back seat as Fermor and his second in command, Captain William Stanley Moss, impersonated the general and his driver, passing several checkpoints without incident. The British agents and their resistance cohorts evaded capture as thousands of German soldiers scoured the island looking for Kreipe, who was later interrogated and sent to a POW camp in Canada. However, there were harsh reprisals against the civilian population of Crete.

Captain Moss featured the story of the kidnapping operation in his post-war book *Ill Met by Moonlight*, which was later made into a motion picture.

LIEUTENANT COLONEL BLAIR ‘PADDY’ MAYNE

January 11, 1915 – December 14, 1955

British Army | Distinguished Service Order with three bars; French Legion of Honor; Croix de Guerre

ABOVE Lieutenant Colonel Blair ‘Paddy’ Mayne became a legendary figure while serving with the SAS during World War Two. **Public Domain**

BLAIR ‘PADDY’ Mayne was born in Newtownards, Northern Ireland, and in his youth developed a reputation as a superb rugby player and amateur boxer. He studied law and became an attorney but was fond of alcohol and further known for his raucous behaviour.

During the opening months of World War Two, Mayne volunteered for the Royal Ulster Rifles. He later opted for the Commandos and the promise of adventure. He did, indeed, find what he sought. And in the process, Mayne became one of the most famous soldiers in the history of British and Commonwealth special forces. He fought in the Middle East with No. 11 Commando, was Mentioned in Despatches, and was supposedly recruited into the Special Air Service while sitting in a cell after being accused of striking his commanding officer.

Mayne, nevertheless, brought early success to SAS operations in 1941, destroying 24 aircraft on the ground at Tamet airfield in Libya and killing a number of German and Italians when he burst through a door and shot up the officer’s dining area. As the marauding SAS played havoc in German rear areas, Mayne was said to have personally destroyed 100 enemy planes on the ground.

When SAS founder Lieutenant Colonel David Stirling was captured by the Germans in early 1943, Mayne was given command of the elite unit. He led SAS operations in Sicily and Italy (the formation was temporarily named Special Raiding Squadron during this time) and by mid-1944, the SAS was operating with the French resistance. On April 9, 1945, Mayne killed several German snipers in action at Oldenburg, Germany, and calmly drove his Jeep along a road while his machine gunner poured fire into enemy positions. The action facilitated the advance of the Canadian 4th Armoured Division.

For heroism at Oldenburg, Mayne was initially recommended for the Victoria Cross; however, it was downgraded to the Distinguished Service Order. A campaign to reinstate the Victoria Cross is active today and has received widespread support.

A towering figure in the annals of the special forces, Mayne was killed in a road traffic accident in 1955.

BELOW Armed to the teeth, this SAS patrol posed in the North African desert in 1942. Paddy Mayne and the SAS wreaked havoc on Axis installations. **Public Domain**

GENERAL WILLIAM J. 'WILD BILL' DONOVAN

January 1, 1883 – February 8, 1959

US Army; Office of Strategic Services | Medal of Honor; Distinguished Service Cross; Distinguished Service Medal; Silver Star; Purple Heart; National Security Medal

WILLIAM J. 'Wild Bill' Donovan was already a military hero in 1941, when the United States entered World War Two. He was highly decorated for heroism in the Great War and a wealthy Wall Street attorney when President Franklin D. Roosevelt, actually something of a political opponent but an old friend from law school, enlisted his services as an advisor.

In July 1941, Roosevelt appointed Donovan as coordinator of information. Donovan, who had already begun developing ties to the British intelligence community, was named head of the Office of Strategic Services (OSS) the following year with the charge of assisting resistance forces. Donovan soon wrote in a top secret document dated June 25, 1942, and titled Primary Blueprint Memo, "… We face an enemy who believes one of his chief weapons is that none but he will employ terror. But we will turn terror against him – or we will cease to exist."

ABOVE The statue of Wild Bill Donovan at CIA headquarters in Langley, Virginia, was dedicated in October 1988. **Public Domain**

During World War Two, Donovan recruited talent wherever he could, establishing a team of 16,000 OSS agents who operated behind enemy lines around the world. His operatives assisted the resistance to the Nazis in Europe from Italy to occupied France and worked with Chinese forces against the Japanese on the Asian mainland.

After the war, President Harry Truman ordered that the OSS should be disbanded. However, by 1947 a new organization, the Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) had emerged, and the structure and activities of the OSS were certainly influential in its formation and conduct.

Donovan returned to the practice of law after World War Two and worked behind the scenes to help with the formation of the CIA after Truman declined to appoint him as its director. In the administration of President Dwight D. Eisenhower, Donovan accepted the post of ambassador to Thailand. Today, he is considered the founder of the CIA.

LEFT Major General William J. Donovan was a decorated hero of World War One and the first director of the Office of Strategic Services. **Public Domain**

CERTIFICADO DE SOLVENCIA
13 10 65
SERIAL 064574

JUAN PUJOL GARCIA (GARBO)

February 14, 1912 – October 10, 1988

MI6 Security Service | Member of the Order of the British Empire; Iron Cross 2nd Class

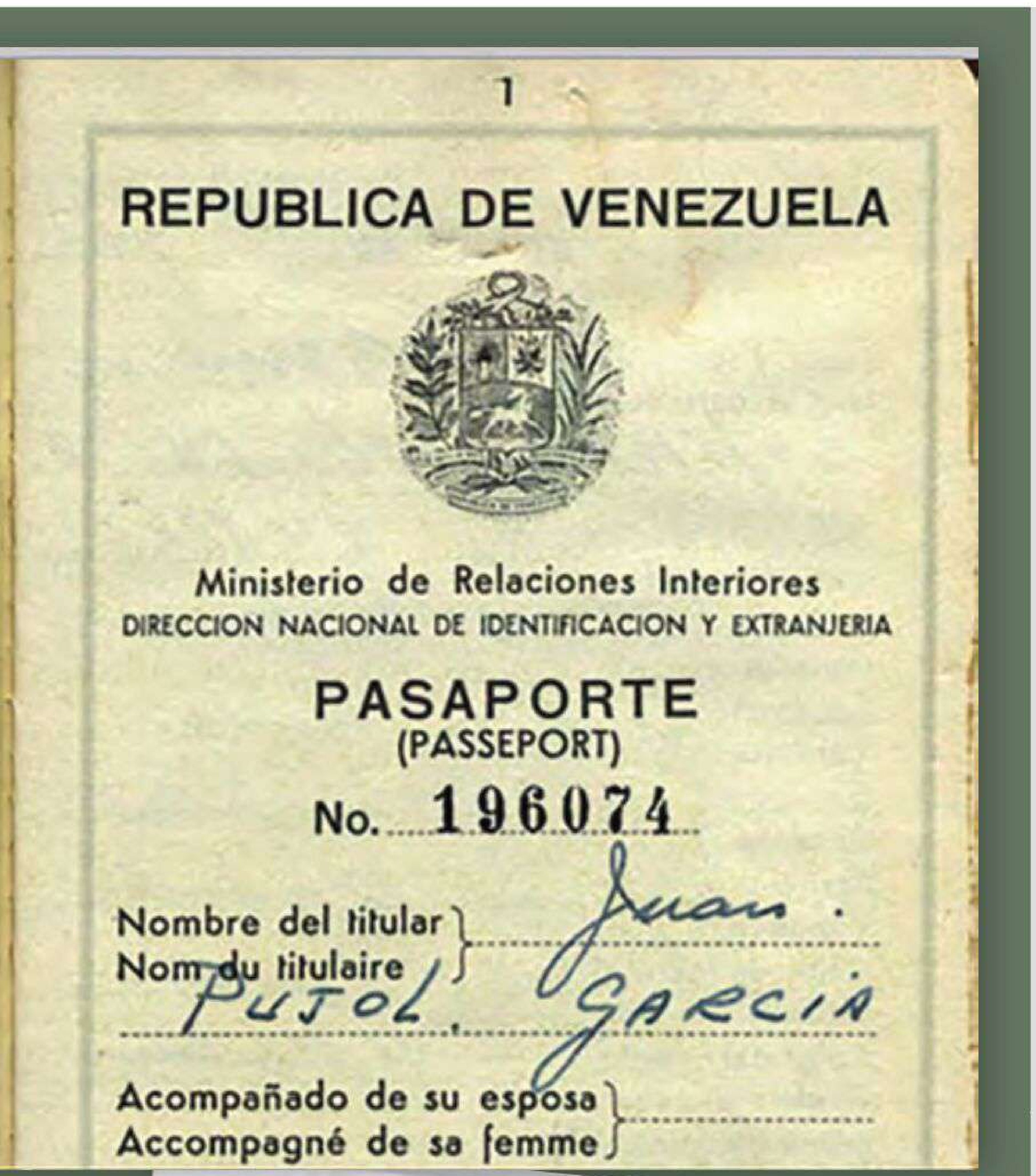
JUAN PUJOL Garcia is perhaps the only individual who received decorations for meritorious service to both the Allied and Axis causes during World War Two. However, the reason for such a circumstance is simple. The Nazis never knew they had been taken in – fooled by a double agent who utilised the famous code name 'Garbo'.

The success of the Allied D-Day landings in Normandy on June 6, 1944, was due in part to the near flawless execution of an elaborate deception. *Operation Fortitude* succeeded in convincing the Germans that the invasion would take place at the Pas-de-Calais and that the fictitious US First Army Group (FUSAG) would play a key role.

The story of Garcia is simply remarkable. A veteran of the Spanish Civil War, who actually fought for both the Nationalists and Republicans, Garcia realised with the outbreak of war in 1939 that he needed to act, as he later explained, for "the good of humanity."

Garcia contacted the British, offering his services as a spy. He got nowhere. However, he refused to give up. He convinced the Germans that he could spy for them in Britain. After he received German training, he actually relocated to Lisbon and finally got the attention of British intelligence. In partnership with MI6 agent Tomas Harris, he developed a fictitious spy network of 27 operatives supposedly dispersed across Britain.

By late 1942, having supplied information on the Allied invasion of North Africa – accurate but too late to affect the operation – Garbo, using the German



1

REPUBLICA DE VENEZUELA

Ministerio de Relaciones Interiores
DIRECCION NACIONAL DE IDENTIFICACION Y EXTRANJERIA

PASAPORTE
(PASSEPORT)

No. 196074

Nombre del titular
Nom du titulaire } Juan Pujol Garcia

Acompañado de su esposa
Accompagné de sa femme }

TOP The Venezuelan passport used by Juan Pujol Garcia gives no hint of his contribution to the Allied victory in World War Two. **Public Domain**

ABOVE Juan Pujol Garcia, a British double agent known as Garbo, deceived the Germans with false messages related to the D-Day landings. **Public Domain**

code name Alaric, had gained the confidence of his handlers in Berlin. During the first six months of 1944, approximately 500 radio communications from Garbo reached Nazi intelligence. Even after the landings in Normandy, Garbo's messages convinced the Germans that the effort was merely a diversion for the coming attack at the Pas-de-Calais.

Garbo's true identity and allegiance were never uncovered by the Nazis. His security service case files were released in 1999.

LIEUTENANT COMMANDER IAN FLEMING

May 28, 1908 –
August 12, 1964

Royal Navy Volunteer Reserve, Naval Intelligence Division | Danish King Christian X Liberty Medal

ABOVE Ian Fleming, author of the famed James Bond spy novels, used his experiences with British Naval Intelligence during World War Two for inspiration. **Public Domain**

IAN FLEMING, the scion of a wealthy family born in Mayfair, is responsible for perhaps the greatest fictional espionage entertainment franchise in history. James Bond, Agent 007 of British Intelligence, has been the central character of numerous books penned by Fleming, and many of these have been made into motion pictures viewed by millions. More than a half century after Fleming's death, the Bond genre remains popular the world over.

Interestingly, much of Fleming's material for James Bond and his fictional espionage career was derived from the author's service with British Naval Intelligence during World War Two. Fleming was persuaded by Admiral John Godfrey, Royal Navy Director of Naval Intelligence, to join the organisation in the summer of 1939, just weeks before the outbreak of war. Using the code name 17F, Fleming was commissioned in the Royal Navy Volunteer Reserve.

Fleming's influence grew, and he is credited with the authorship of the Trout Memo, which inspired *Operation Mincemeat*, a highly successful deception of the Nazis involving a corpse, false documents, and misinformation regarding the Allied invasion of Sicily. He also authored a memo advocating a special operation to gain intelligence on the German Enigma machine, although that mission was never carried out.

Later, Fleming formed No. 30 Commando, also known as 30 Assault Unit (30AU) for clandestine operations in Europe. He was responsible for the distribution of intelligence to Royal Navy officers participating in the D-Day operations in June 1944 and worked with William J. 'Wild Bill' Donovan to improve cooperation between the British and US intelligence communities during the war. As Allied forces advanced into formerly occupied territories in the summer of 1944, Fleming was responsible for the establishment of T-Force, gathering and safeguarding valuable documents, weapons, equipment, and even individuals, that came into British custody.

ABOVE Working alongside American engineers, members of T-Force disassemble a nuclear pile in Germany in April 1945. **Public Domain**

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BRITAIN AT WAR

ISSUE 169

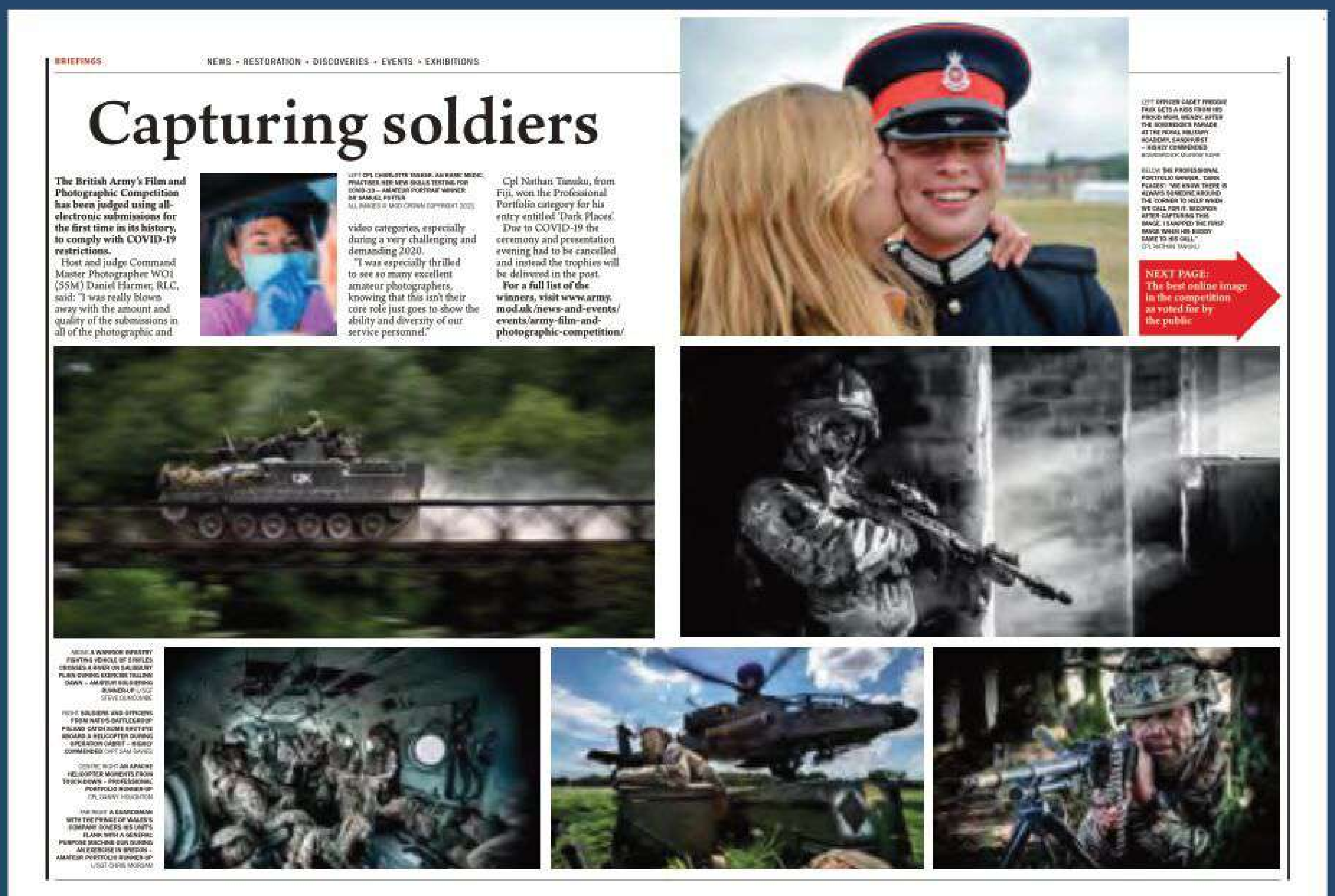
HRH THE DUKE OF EDINBURGH
From destitution to distinction (1921-2021)

BLITZ SPIRIT FACT OR FANTASY?
LUCY WORSLEY LOOKS FOR THE TRUTH BEHIND OUR STIFF UPPER LIP

UNARMED & DANGEROUS
How a horseboat captain who beat the German Navy changed VC rules

SUICIDE MISSION
The plan to bomb Nazi invaders with biplanes

PLUS THE LONDONERS WHO FOUGHT FIRESTORMS ON THE 'HARDEST NIGHT'


Capturing soldiers

WINDOWS TO THE SOUL

From the mundane to the shocking, war artists are in a unique position to document and interpret the impact of conflict from every angle.

Marc Kennedy reviews the many and varied approaches to illustrating mankind's darkest moments

"Some of the greatest artists of the 20th century – along with many unknowns – gave human perspective to inhuman acts"

CHRISTOPHER FURNESS VC

As a viscount's son and the heir to a fortune counted in millions, 'Dick' Furness had everything to live for. However, he sacrificed it all to save a trapped convoy from destruction in France in the spring of 1940

Words: Steve Snelling

STANDING TALL

"Furness's appearance could scarcely have been more opportune… Never was [Buckland] so relieved to see him or more grateful to have had his advice so blatantly ignored"

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RESISTANCE IN WESTERN EUROPE

1939 - 1945

PIERRE ROCHE was only 19 years old, but the thought of hostile foreign occupation of his homeland spurred him to action. In September 1940, just weeks after the Nazi military juggernaut had subdued France and German soldiers in their steel helmets and field grey uniforms had goose stepped down the Champs Élysées, he was determined to do something – anything – to resist the invaders.

Roche was arrested while attempting to cut the telephone lines connecting the towns of Royan and La Rochelle and summarily executed in one of the earliest incidents involving resistance to Nazi occupation in World War Two. Roche was only one of many who forfeited their lives to strike a blow against the Germans.

Actually, the first documented killing of a 'resister' in France occurred at the end of August 1940, when Israel Carp, a Polish immigrant, was shot dead in Bordeaux. His crime? Expressing contempt during a Nazi parade through the streets of the city. By the end of the year, at least eight people had been executed for defying the uninvited occupiers of France in one way or another.

Three days after the execution of Pierre Roche, General Otto von Stülpnagel, Nazi Military Governor of France, issued a statement warning that resistance would not be tolerated and that anyone arrested for committing acts of sabotage would be executed. It was not a hollow threat, and many heroes went to the gallows, faced firing squads, or were tortured and beaten to death. However, such retribution did little to quell the surge of defiant acts that would characterise the work of the resistance. The spark had already begun to grow into an open flame – in France and in other occupied countries. In Germany itself hatred of the Nazis spawned an active resistance that had begun to emerge even before Hitler plunged Europe into armed conflict.

During World War Two resistance movements sprang up throughout Europe as thousands of individuals sought to strike blows against the Nazis. Although the exact number of participants is unknown, there is no doubt that they were legion. Their activities ranged from civil disobedience such as labour strikes, or deliberately producing inferior products while working in factories supplying the German war effort, through printing and distributing propaganda and went all the way 'up' to sabotage and armed opposition.

There were many heroes of the resistance in Nazi-occupied Europe, some of them revered for their courage and perseverance while others whose names will never be known were willing to sacrifice themselves for the future, for the day of liberation from tyranny. They acted in organised groups or movements, and they acted alone. But, nevertheless, they rose up.

ABOVE A group of early Polish resistance fighters posed for this photograph in late 1939, just days after World War Two erupted. Public Domain

ABOVE Members of the Maquis, an anti-Nazi resistance group, gather in a street in a French town during World War Two. Public Domain

The resisters themselves were motivated by a variety of perspectives. Their numbers included patriots, ultra-nationalists, communists, socialists, Jews, and other ethnic groups. In France alone, more than a half dozen organisations fielded fighters, while in Belgium as many as 15 clandestine clusters of highly motivated individuals sought to do damage to the Nazi war effort wherever possible.

Often separated by differing political ideologies, resistance groups coexisted for a time as they fought a common enemy. In France, the communists were predominant in the occupied areas, while other forces flourished in Vichy to the south. The Maquis rose up, while the Free French Forces of the Interior came to prominence in the latter stages of the war, absorbing several fragmented efforts.

In the Balkans, the communist partisans under Josip Broz Tito opposed the Nazis, as did the Chetniks, royalists and Serbian nationalists led by Dragoljub Mihailovic. The two groups fought the Germans and each other during the war years. Resistance groups in Scandinavia and Italy disrupted German troop movements, communications, and supply lines, and like the others they managed to keep thousands of Nazi soldiers occupied with suppressing the harassment rather than fighting the advancing Allied armies. In Poland, the Warsaw Uprising, brutally suppressed in the summer and autumn of 1944, was indicative of the resolve of the Home Army to fight the occupiers.

Soon after the war broke out, the British government established the covert Special Operations Executive (SOE), ordered by Prime Minister Winston Churchill to "set Europe ablaze." The SOE responded with its own covert operations while delivering liaison agents and supplies to resistance fighters across the continent. After US entry into the war, the Office of Strategic Services (OSS), forerunner of the modern Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) took an active role in clandestine operations as resistance fighters rescued downed Allied airmen, rallied the people, and made the Nazis wary at every turn.

The heroes of the resistance in Europe kept the fires of freedom burning and willingly risked their lives to hasten the demise of their Nazi oppressors.

ANDRÉE PEEL

February 3, 1905 – March 5, 2010

French Resistance | Legion of Honor; Order of Liberation; US Medal of Freedom

WHEN WORLD War Two erupted, Andrée Peel was working as the owner of a beauty shop in the French port city of Brest in Brittany. She joined the resistance soon afterward and began distributing an underground newspaper that published anti-Nazi content.

During night operations, Peel and other resistance fighters used signal torches to guide planes to safe landing areas with their cargoes of supplies, weapons, and sometimes Allied covert operations specialists. On numerous occasions, she assisted trapped Allied soldiers and downed airmen to reach safe houses and then return to England. Reports credit her with saving the lives of more than 100 Allied service personnel.

ABOVE Liberated prisoners of Ravensbrück concentration camp are gathered together in 1945. Andrée Peel was transferred from there to Buchenwald. **Public Domain**

ABOVE Resistance fighter Andrée Peel receives the Legion of Honor for her service while fighting the Nazis in World War Two. **Alamy Images**

Throughout her time with the resistance, Andrée Peel exhibited tremendous bravery. In 1944, she was arrested by the Gestapo in Paris, tortured, and deported to the Nazi concentration camp at Ravensbrück north of the German capital of Berlin. She was subsequently transferred to the camp at Buchenwald, near Weimar, and contracted meningitis, which she survived. "I still suffer from that; I still have the pain," she once said. "I was born with courage. I did not allow cruel people to find in me a person they could torture."

During the last days of World War Two, the Nazis were routinely executing prisoners as Allied soldiers drove deeper into the Third Reich. She was being placed in front of a firing squad just as US soldiers arrived to liberate Buchenwald.

Peel returned to Paris after the war and began working in a restaurant, where she met her husband, John, a student at the time. The couple lived for years in Long Ashton, near Bristol, and Andrée received numerous accolades for her service during the war. She also wrote an autobiography titled *Miracles Do Happen*. She lived to the age of 105.

JEAN MOULIN

June 20, 1899 – July 8, 1943

French Resistance | Interment in the Panthéon

"IT WOULD be insane and criminal, in the event of Allied action on the continent, not to make use of troops prepared for the great sacrifices, scattered and unorganised today, but tomorrow capable of making up a united army of parachute troops already in place, familiar with the terrain and having already selected their enemy and determined their objective."

So stated Jean Moulin, perhaps the most famous and recognised leader of French resistance to Nazi occupation in World War Two. Moulin studied law and became the youngest prefect, a political official responsible for a government district, in all of France. When the Germans occupied his department, Moulin refused to sign a false document related to atrocities committed by the French Army. After a failed suicide attempt, he made his way to England.

In October 1941, Moulin approached Charles de Gaulle, leader of the Free French, and offered his services as an organiser and unifier of the numerous resistance groups then active against the Nazis. He returned to France in January 1942, authorised as the Free French delegate general in the unoccupied zone of the country. He played a key role in the organisation of the Maquis, the guerrilla movement that flourished across the French countryside, and in the National Council of the Resistance, serving as its first president. The council brought together two trade unions, five political parties, and eight resistance movements in a tenuous partnership.

Moulin was based in the city of Lyon and took the pseudonym 'Max', and with the backing and financial support of the Free French he participated in virtually every facet of the organised resistance. However, he was betrayed to the Nazi secret police, the Gestapo, in the spring of 1943. Arrested in Caluire, a suburb of Lyon, on June 21, he was interrogated and severely tortured at the direction of Klaus Barbie, the infamous Butcher of Lyon, and died aboard a train taking him to prison in Germany.

ABOVE One of the most famous figures in the French resistance to Nazi occupation, Jean Moulin was captured and tortured to death in 1943. **Public Domain**

ABOVE Nazi Klaus Barbie, the infamous Butcher of Lyon, was responsible for the murder of Jean Moulin and other members of the French resistance. **Public Domain**

JOSEPHINE BAKER

June 3, 1906 – April 12, 1975

French Resistance | Cenotaph in the Panthéon; Chevalier of the Legion of Honor; Croix de Guerre; Resistance Medal

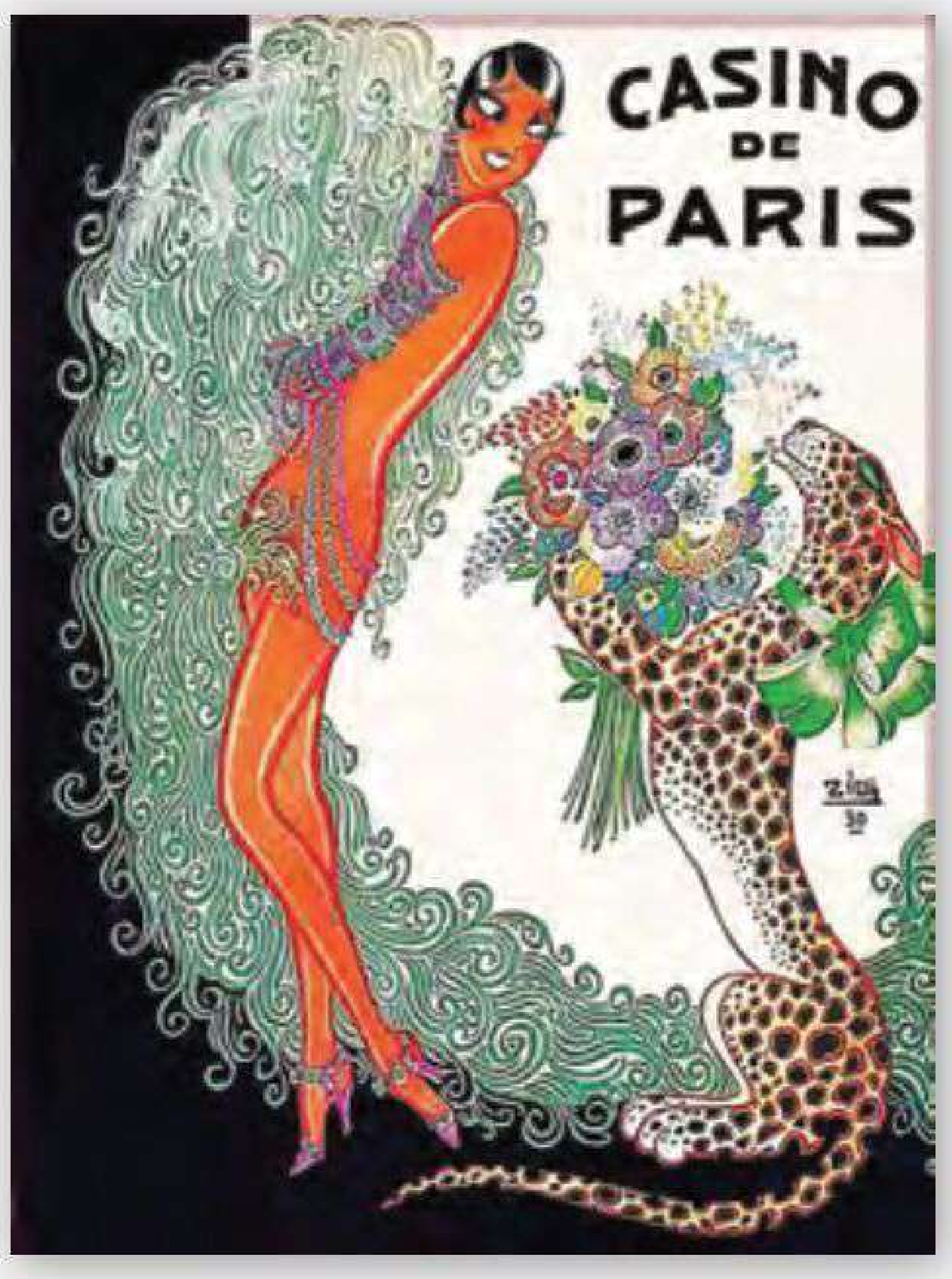
ABOVE Popular entertainer Josephine Baker served as a resistance operative in Nazi-occupied France, passing valuable intelligence to authorities. **Public Domain**

JOSEPHINE WAS one of the most popular entertainers of her era. She was the first black woman to perform a starring role in a major motion picture. And during World War Two, she served her adopted country of France as a resistance fighter. Born in St. Louis, Missouri, she renounced her US citizenship in 1937 and became a French national.

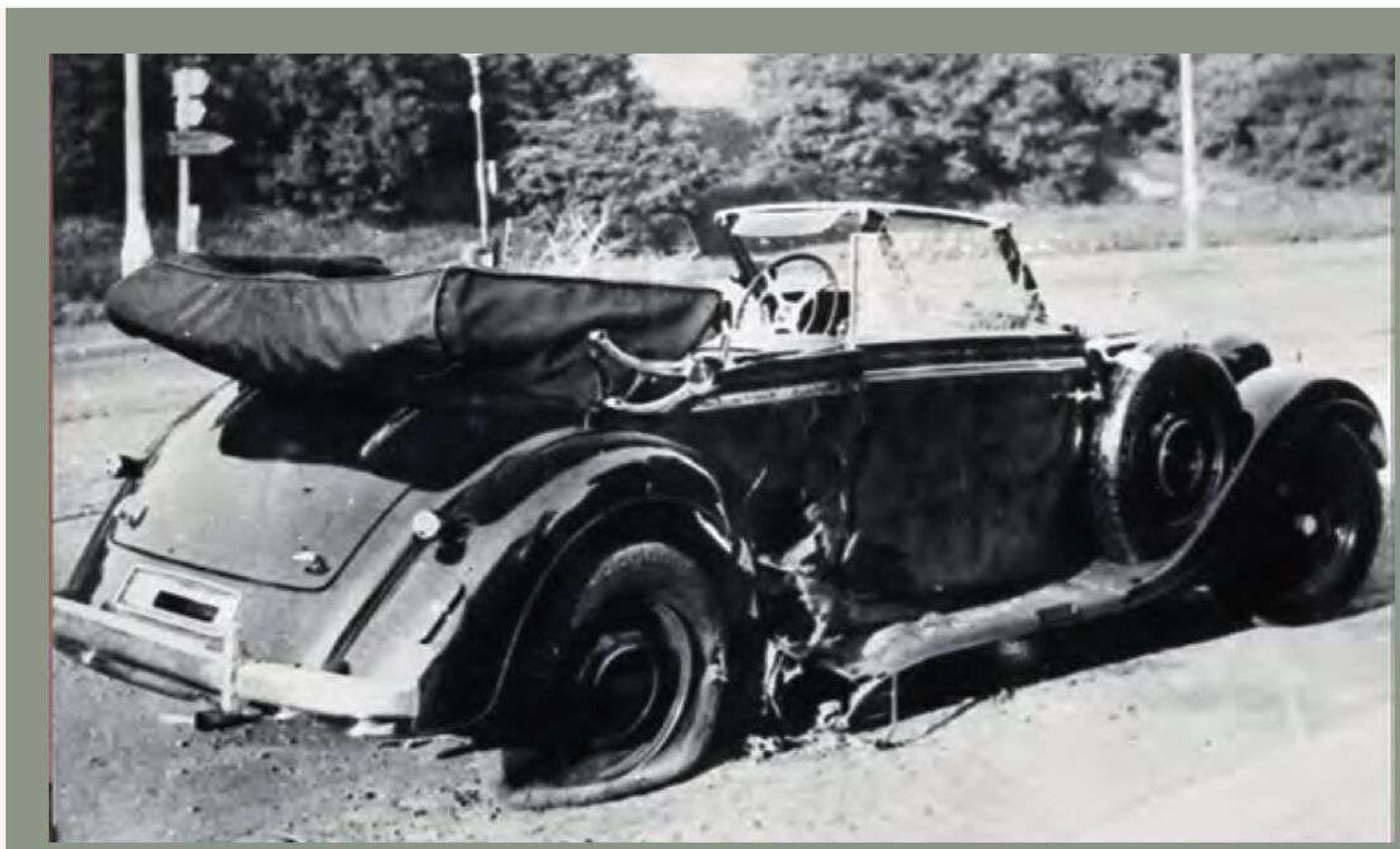
When the Nazis occupied France in 1940, Baker continued to perform her exotic stage shows. The performances were well attended by the Germans, and when she heard information being passed from one soldier to another, she relayed the intelligence to the resistance, writing the information on music sheets with invisible ink. She worked for the Deuxiéme Bureau as an honourable correspondent and assisted Jacques Abtey, the chief of French counterintelligence in Paris before the capitulation. She moved in fashionable social circles and gleaned intelligence from foreign diplomats, readily supplying details to Abtey.

Baker travelled to North Africa in 1941 and ventured to neutral Spain, gathering intelligence and scribbling notes that were hidden in her underwear to avoid detection by Vichy French and Spanish officials and attaining the rank of 2nd lieutenant in the Free French Forces. After recovering from a near fatal miscarriage, surgery, and resulting peritonitis and sepsis, she entertained Allied troops serving in North Africa, charging no admission fees, and allowing only military personnel to attend.

Baker resumed her long career after the war. She returned to the United States and became a champion of the Civil Rights Movement, refusing to perform for segregated audiences. She once told a gathering, "You know, friends, that I do not lie to you when I tell you I have walked into the palaces of kings and queens and into the houses of presidents. And much more. But I could not walk into a hotel in American and get a cup of coffee, and that made me mad."



LEFT This colourful playbill advertises one of Josephine Baker's popular shows in Paris. Baker became an officer of the Free French Forces during World War Two. **Public Domain**



ABOVE Jan Kubis inflicted heavy damage on Reinhard Heydrich's Mercedes in a Prague street during *Operation Anthropoid*, the mission to assassinate the Nazi officer. **Public Domain**

STAFF SERGEANT JAN KUBIS

June 24, 1913 – June 18, 1942

Czechoslovakian Army | Croix de Guerre; Czechoslovakian War Cross; Military Order of the White Lion

REINHARD HEYDRICH, SS Obergruppenfuhrer and Reichsprotektor of Bohemia and Moravia, was a bloodthirsty killer. He directed numerous atrocities, terrorising civilians in the occupied territories, and was the primary architect of the Nazi genocide against European Jewry.

On May 27, 1942, as Heydrich's dark green Mercedes staff car approached a sharp turn on a street in Prague, capital of Czechoslovakia, two assassins leaped toward the vehicle. One of them, Josef Gabcik, pointed a Sten gun at Heydrich. Click! Click! The weapon jammed. Heydrich drew his pistol, but seconds later the other assassin, Jan Kubis, threw a modified anti-tank bomb that detonated near the rear of the Mercedes, wounding the Nazi officer seriously.

ABOVE Trained by the British Special Operations Executive, Jan Kubis participated in *Operation Anthropoid*, the assassination of Reinhard Heydrich, in May 1942. **Public Domain**

Heydrich died a week later.

The assassins made good their escape but were subsequently betrayed and cornered on June 18 by the SS and Gestapo in the crypt of the Church of St. Cyril and St. Methodius in Prague. The ensuing gun battle raged for several hours. Kubis was seriously wounded, and though the Nazis had hoped to take one of the Czechs alive, he died as he was being transported to a hospital. Others committed suicide rather than endure capture and torture. Kubis was 28 years old.

Following service with the Czech Army and the French Foreign Legion, Kubis had reached Britain in the summer of 1940. Recruited and trained by the British Special Operations Executive (SOE) for *Operation Anthropoid*, the mission to eliminate Heydrich, he was airlifted along with others into Czechoslovakia in late 1941. Hiding out for months, the SOE men planned their strike against Heydrich meticulously, tracking their target's daily routine before setting up the ambush that ultimately ended the tyrant's life.

Although the objective of Anthropoid was achieved, it came with a terrible price. On the day of Heydrich's elaborate Nazi funeral, Hitler ordered the Czech village of Lidice levelled. Dozens of innocent men and boys were summarily shot, while women and children were sent to concentration camps. Further, numerous family members of Jan Kubis were rounded up and executed.

HUBERT GERMAIN

August 6, 1920 – October 12, 2021

Free French Forces | Companion of the Order of Liberation; Grand Cross of the Legion of Honour; Croix de Guerre; Resistance Medal; Honorary Member Order of the British Empire

ABOVE Hubert Germain was one of the last surviving members of the French resistance, having served with the Free French Forces in World War Two. Alamy Images

HUBERT GERMAIN was taking his examination for entrance into the French Naval Academy when the nation capitulated to the invading Nazis in 1940. He declined to proceed and departed France for Britain aboard a ship that was carrying Polish soldiers to continue the fight against Nazi Germany.

Germain volunteered his services to the Free French Forces under General Charles de Gaulle and served in Syria as a staff officer with the 1st Free French Light Division during the battles with Vichy French forces and in North Africa at the pivotal engagements of Bir Hacheim and El Alamein. A superior officer described him as having shown "very good leadership qualities…for his men a constant example of calm and courage." He was soon promoted to second lieutenant and was wounded during the Italian campaign while directing a section of heavy machine guns during the fighting in the Liri Valley. When Allied forces landed in southern France during *Operation Anvil-Dragoon* on August 15, 1944, Germain was among them.

Only 1,038 individuals were honoured with the Order of the Liberation, and Germain received the medal on November 22, 1944. He served with the French Army during the post-war occupation of Germany until 1946. He later served as mayor of the city of Saint-Chéron and as national minister of posts and telecommunications.

Germain died in 2021 at the age of 101 and had taken part in annual war commemorations until he was 99 years old. In a statement released shortly after Germain's death, French President Emmanuel Macron recalled that day in 1940 when the young man, not yet 20 years old, turned to the resistance. "Rising from his examination table, he preferred to hand in a blank paper rather than give a blank check to the France that had gone to bed, that had given in to resignation and renunciation."

ABOVE General Charles de Gaulle reviews French fighting men volunteering for continuing service against the Nazis after reaching England. Public Domain

HENRYK DOBRZANSKI

June 22, 1897 – April 30, 1940

Polish Army; Resistance | Virtuti Militari; Cross of Valor

ABOVE Major Henryk Dobrzanski led one of the earliest resistance organisations during World War Two. He was killed by the Germans in 1940. Public Domain

BY 1939, Major Henryk Dobrzanski was a veteran of combat during World War One and the conflicts of the post-war period involving the independent nation of Poland.

Remaining in the Polish Army, he had become well-known for his equestrian ability and participated on the Polish team in the 1928 Olympic Games.

Dobrzanski was serving as a cavalry officer when the Nazis invaded Poland on September 1, 1939, and his unit engaged them on several occasions. Two weeks later, the Soviet Red Army invaded from the east, and he fought them too, particularly in the defence of the city of Grodno late in the month. When Grodno fell, Dobrzanski was one of dozens of soldiers who refused to surrender and decided to organise a resistance force – perhaps the first armed unit of its kind in World War Two. He commanded fewer than 200 men who fought their way toward Warsaw; however, the capital fell to the Germans before their arrival.

ABOVE During the last days of the Nazi conquest of Poland in 1939, Polish prisoners are marched into captivity. Public Domain

About 50 men remained, determined to continue the fight, and Dobrzanski dubbed the small band the 'Separated Unit of the Polish Army'. He assumed the pseudonym of 'Hubal', a reference to his noble family's coat of arms. Following the surrender of the Polish forces, Hubal undertook a series of attacks against the Germans. At first, the resistance fighters received the support of the local population; however, in March 1940, Hubal and his men fought the Germans at the town of Hucisko, inflicting about 100 casualties. In brutal reprisal, the Nazis murdered more than 700 civilians and razed several villages. In addition, the leaders of a major resistance faction, the Union of Armed Struggle, the forerunner of the Home Army, feared that further raids would cause problems recruiting for their own coming operations.

Hubal refused to disband his resistance group, but on April 30, 1940, the Germans ambushed the unit. Dobrzanski was killed by machine-gun fire. His body was mutilated and displayed by the Nazis as a warning.

JOSIP BROZ 'TITO'

May 7, 1892 – May 4, 1980

Yugoslavian Partisans | British Knight Grand Cross Order of the Bath; Croix de Guerre; French Legion of Honor; Czech Order of the White Lion; Soviet Order of Lenin; Yugoslavia Order of National Liberation; Order of the Partisan Star

ABOVE Josip Broz Tito, far right, stands with leaders of his communist Partisan insurgency in the mountains of Yugoslavia in 1944. **Public Domain**

TITO WAS the leader of the Partisans in Yugoslavia during World War Two, perhaps the most successful resistance movement to Nazi occupation during the conflict. He was a veteran of World War One, serving in the Austro-Hungarian Army, and as a prisoner of the Russians was introduced to Marxist theory. He later became an ardent communist.

An early leader of the Communist Party of Yugoslavia, he was born Josip Broz and took the pseudonym Tito during the 1930s as he worked to promote Marxism in Yugoslavia. He worked at times as a client and operative supported by the Soviet Union.

When the Germans invaded Yugoslavia on April 6, 1941, Tito formed a military committee within the communist party apparatus and issued a plea for resistance to the Nazis. Amid the complex ideologies and allegiances of the states that had formed the Yugoslav nation, he succeeded in fielding a resistance movement dominated by communists, which became known as the Partisans. The Partisans fought the rival monarchist Chetniks, under Draza Mihailovic, as well as the Nazis, and Tito saw the resistance as a means to secure post-war power for the communist party in Yugoslavia.

The Partisans continually harassed the Germans in Yugoslavia, ambushing troop columns, derailing trains, and occupying thousands of soldiers in anti-resistance roles who would otherwise have been fighting the Allied armies. As the war progressed, Tito secured the support not only of the Soviet Union, but also of Britain and the United States, which supplied aid to his guerrilla fighters.

The Germans were constantly attempting to destroy the Partisans and to kill or capture Tito. On May 25, 1944, during one of their offensive operations codenamed *Rosselsprung*, or Knight's Move, he narrowly escaped their clutches. In the autumn of 1944, as German forces in the Balkans were weakened, the Partisans launched a general offensive that ultimately succeeded in liberating the country.

Tito refused subservience to the Soviet Union and maintained a degree of independence unlike any other nation in the post-war communist world. He became a champion of the nonaligned movement and remained in power in Yugoslavia until his death.

LEFT Tito, communist leader of the Yugoslav Partisans, met with British Prime Minister Winston Churchill in Naples, Italy, during World War Two. **Public Domain**

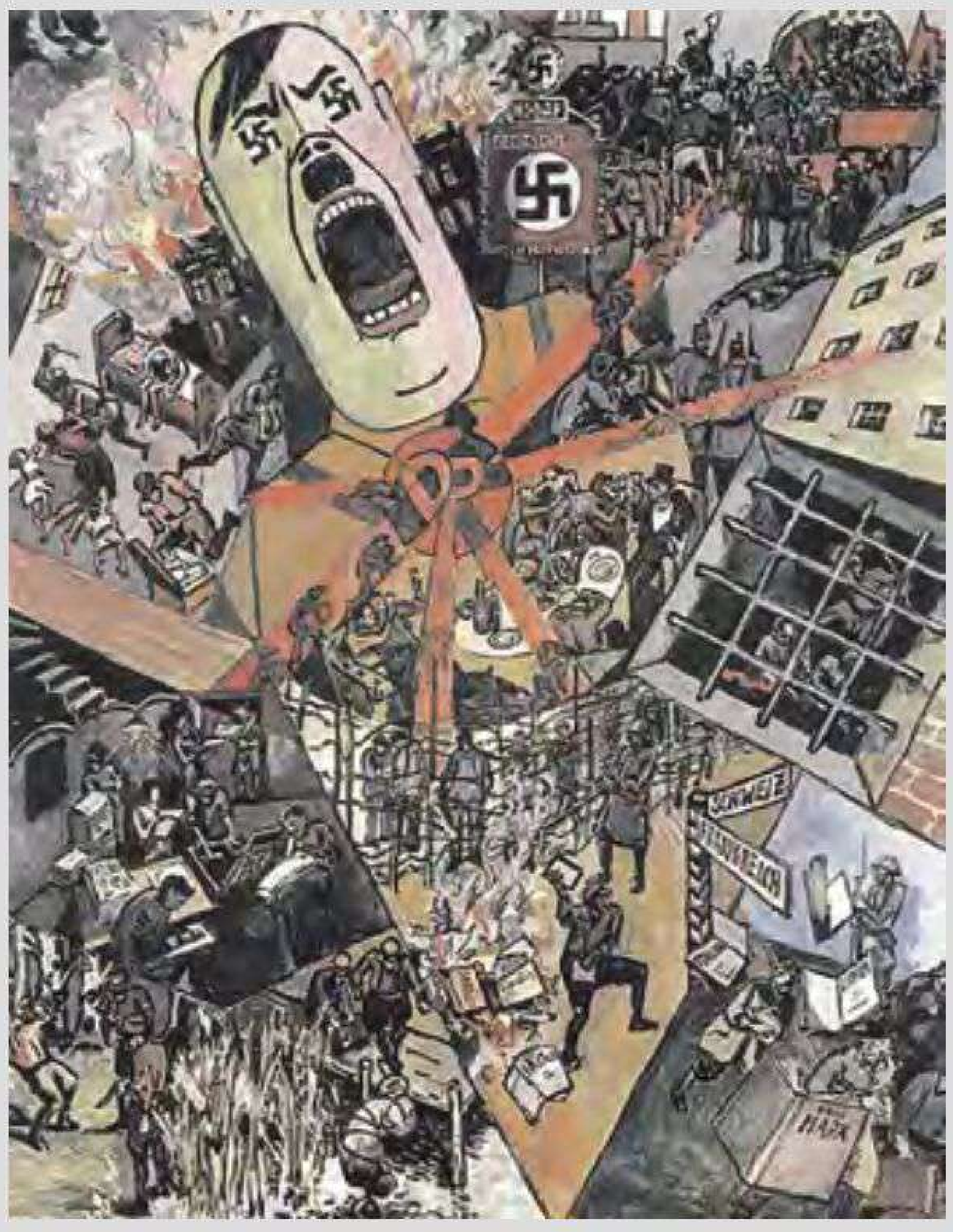
ADMIRAL WILHELM CANARIS

January 1, 1887 – April 9, 1945

German Navy; Abwehr | Iron Cross; German Cross in Silver; War Merit Cross

ABOVE Admiral Wilhelm Canaris, head of the Nazi Abwehr, was also a conspirator against the regime of Adolf Hitler. **Public Domain**

WHEN ADMIRAL Wilhelm Canaris, former chief of the Abwehr, the German military intelligence service, was led to the gallows at Flossenburg concentration camp in the last days of World War Two, he remarked, "I die for my Fatherland. I have a clear conscience. I only did my duty to my country when I tried to oppose the criminal folly of Hitler."



ABOVE Anti-Nazi Hans Vogeler painted this haunting image titled 'The Third Reich' in 1934. Admiral Wilhelm Canaris understood the horrors of Hitler's regime. **Public Domain**

Canaris was an enigmatic figure during World War Two. As head of German Intelligence, he was a trusted member of the Third Reich leadership. However, he was also among a number of high-ranking officials and military men that vehemently opposed the Nazi regime. A veteran of World War One and holder of the Iron Cross, Canaris helped to organise the right-wing Freikorps during the interwar years in Germany. Hitler appointed Canaris head of the Abwehr on January 1, 1935. He was promoted to rear admiral in the spring, supporting the Nazi regime until 1939, when events compelled him to take subversive action.

Although he was in charge of investigating enemies of the state, Canaris was one of them, warning against the atrocities that he knew were being perpetrated against the Jews and other minorities in Nazi Germany. He opposed Nazi territorial expansion in Czechoslovakia and participated in failed attempts to depose Hitler in the late 1930s. He worked to end the ruthless killing sprees of Nazi death squads, or Einsatzgruppen, which followed the German Army advance into Russia on the Eastern Front.

Canaris appointed anti-Nazi Hans Oster to the post of Abwehr deputy director, tacitly approving activities that made dissidents, such as clergyman Dietrich Bonhoeffer, agents of the Abwehr. He was aware of plots to assassinate Hitler and is said to have revealed German grand strategy to the Allies during the course of World War Two while feeding misinformation directly to the Führer.

Canaris was arrested following the failed July 20, 1944, plot to kill Hitler and was starved and beaten prior to his execution.

ABOVE Dietrich Bonhoeffer was hanged by the Nazis at the sprawling Flossenburg concentration camp on April 9, 1945. **Public Domain**

DIETRICH BONHOEFFER

February 4, 1906 – April 9, 1945

Confessing Church | Church of England commemoration; United Methodist Modern-Day Martyr; Evangelical Lutheran Church commemoration

ABOVE Dietrich Bonhoeffer was a Lutheran minister, founder of the Confessing Church, and critic of the Nazis. He was executed in 1945. **Creative Commons**

DIETRICH BONHOEFFER was a Lutheran minister who became an early critic of the Nazi regime and an outspoken opponent of the persecution of Jews and other minorities during the 1930s. His writings on theology and the Christian Church in modern times are considered classics, particularly his 1937 book *The Cost of Discipleship*.

Bonhoeffer criticised the movement of some Christian churches toward the Nazification of Protestantism in the so-called 'Reich Church' and became a founder of the Confessing Church, expressing opposition to the Nazi euthanasia program, as well as the genocide against the Jewish people. He travelled abroad extensively and presented arguments against the Nazi policies to the rest of the world, even confronting Nazi diplomats in foreign cities. He served as church pastor in London from 1933 to 1935 and then returned to Germany, where he trained clergy at an underground seminary. A Gestapo order banned him from Berlin in 1938, and in September 1940, he was forbidden to speak publicly.

Bonhoeffer was made aware of numerous anti-Nazi resistance groups within Germany during the late 1930s. Through contact with his brother-in-law, Hans von Dohnanyi, Bonhoeffer avoided military service and obtained a position in the intelligence service, the Abwehr, traveling outside Germany during 1941-42 and serving as a courier for the resistance. In the autumn of 1941, the first large deportations of Jews took place in Berlin, and Bonhoeffer participated in the documentation of the events along with an attorney of the Confessing Church. The two wrote a memorandum detailing the deportations and passed it to foreign diplomats and individuals within the German military whom they trusted. Bonhoeffer was soon involved peripherally in *Operation Seven*, a programme that helped Jews escape Germany by issuing identification papers as foreign diplomats.

Through Dohnanyi, Bonhoeffer also became aware of numerous plots against Hitler's life. However, it was *Operation Seven* that led to his arrest along with Dohnanyi by the Gestapo in April 1943. After the failed attempt to assassinate Hitler on July 20, 1944, his association with anti-Nazi conspirators led to his transport to Buchenwald concentration camp in February 1945 and then Flossenburg in April. He was hanged at Flossenburg by the Nazis along with Dohnanyi and other resistance leaders.

CARLA CAPPONI

December 7, 1918 – November 24, 2000

Italian Resistance | Gold Medal of Military Valour

ABOVE Carla Capponi was a prominent Italian resistance fighter, taking part in numerous attacks on the Nazis in Rome during World War Two. **Public Domain**

AFTER THE Nazi occupation of Rome in September 1943, Carla Capponi became an active member of the Italian resistance. She joined the Italian Communist Party and allowed resistance fighters to meet in her apartment in the capital city. Soon, she participated in daring operations.

On the evening of December 17, she watched German police officer Georg Johansen Schmidt leave the Hotel Ambasciatori on the Via Veneto and shadowed him inconspicuously. As he walked toward the Italian Ministry of War, taken over by the German Army, Capponi approached within a few feet, drew a 9mm Beretta pistol, and fired two shots. The German fell mortally wounded, and the female assassin, nicknamed the 'Little English Girl', slipped away with his briefcase.

Capponi later reflected, "It was a traumatic experience...I began running down the street with the gun still in my hand… After getting over the initial shock, especially since many of our comrades were being arrested and tortured, all our scruples were replaced by sheer determination to fight for our cause."

Displaying tremendous courage, Capponi had already pulled a wounded Italian soldier from a tank that had been set ablaze by enemy fire, dragging the injured man to safety, and avoiding the pursuing Germans. Later, she met and became engaged to resistance fighter Rosario Bentivegna, and the two were often involved in dangerous assaults on the Nazis in Rome. In December 1943, the couple threw pipe bombs into a restaurant crowded with German soldiers. They blew up trucks parked in front of the Opera House and then gunned down the Germans soldiers that exited the building.

On March 23, 1944, Capponi was among the Italian resistance fighters participating in the Via Rasella attack, a bombing that killed 33 Germans and prompted the infamous reprisal massacre of 335 Italian men and boys at the Ardeatine Caves. She was appointed a deputy commander of the Patriotic Action Groups.

After World War Two, Capponi became a member of the Italian Parliament, representing the communist party.

LEFT A heavily armed Italian resistance fighter strikes a jaunty pose. The resistance made the Germans continually wary in the occupied areas. **Public Domain**

THE PURPOSE of the meeting was to ensure cooperation. And so, they came to the villa Am Grossen Wannsee, on the outskirts of Berlin, each a representative of some department of the sprawling bureaucracy that was the government of the Third Reich.

The odious SS Obergruppenführer Reinhard Heydrich presided, and the topic of discussion was the 'Final Solution of the Jewish Question', a euphemism for the systematic murder and eradication of the Jewish race in Europe. By the time of the infamous Wannsee Conference in January 1942, the actual elimination of European Jewry was well underway, having been undertaken hand in sinister hand with Adolf Hitler's Nazification of Germany and the occupied territories. World War Two was in its third year, but Hitler had vilified the Jews as soon as he had become the mouthpiece of the Nazi Party in the 1920s.

The Nazi rise to power was facilitated by difficult economic times in the wake of World War One, the oppressive terms of the Treaty of Versailles that placed blame for the Great War on the shoulders of Germany, and opportunistic development of the 'stab in the back' theory. Simply put, this idea purported that Germany had not been defeated by external powers, but undermined from within – by Jews, communists, and other 'vermin'. Further, the Jews were – said Hitler – the personification of evil. They had insidiously infiltrated every aspect of daily life in Germany, controlling finance and business for their own enrichment.

While the persecution of European Jews was nothing new, the ethnic people had been oppressed from time to time for centuries, the Nazis' systematic campaign of extermination was like nothing before in recorded history. From 1933 to 1945, the dozen years of the Nazi Reich, an estimated six million Jews were murdered, and the state-sponsored period is known to history as the Holocaust, or the Shoah. Many Jews were worked to death in labour camps, starved in the squalid conditions of ghettos, or killed outright as the German Army and the SS swept across Europe, east and west. Others were terrorised and murdered as well during the Holocaust era, including ethnic Slavs and Gypsies, Jehovah's Witnesses, homosexuals, and political opponents.

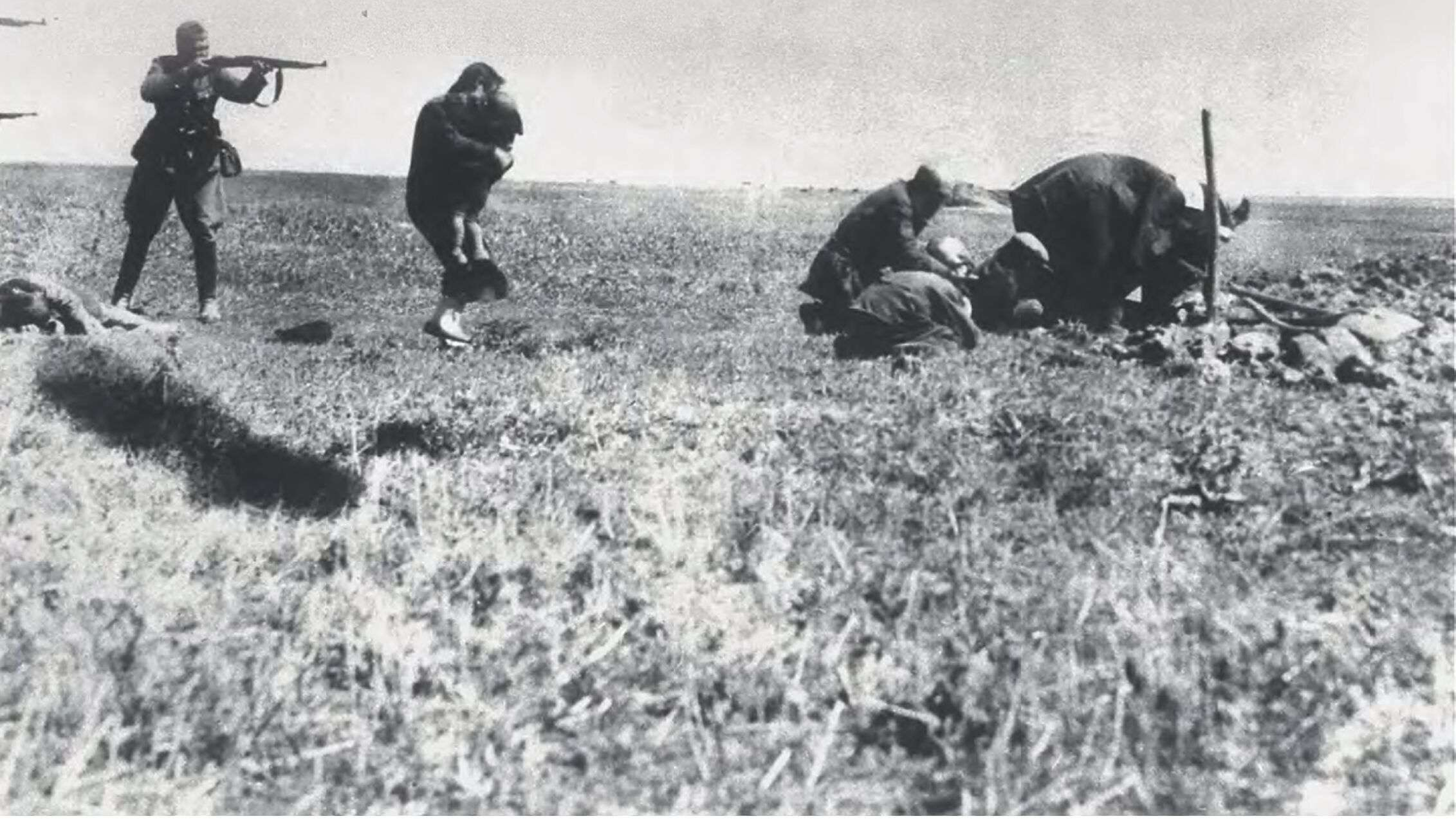
Shortly after the Nazi rise to power in 1933, Hitler's government enabled a state sanctioned pogrom that marginalised the Jews, first in Germany and then across occupied Europe. The Nuremberg Laws of 1935 prohibited marriage between Jews and non-Jewish Germans, stripped Jews and other ethnic populations of their German citizenship, and restricted Jewish ownership of businesses and their ability to earn a living. On the night of November 9, 1938, forever remembered as Kristallnacht, or the Night of Broken Glass, synagogues were burned, Jewish-owned storefronts were smashed, and Jews were dragged into the streets, mercilessly beaten, or murdered.

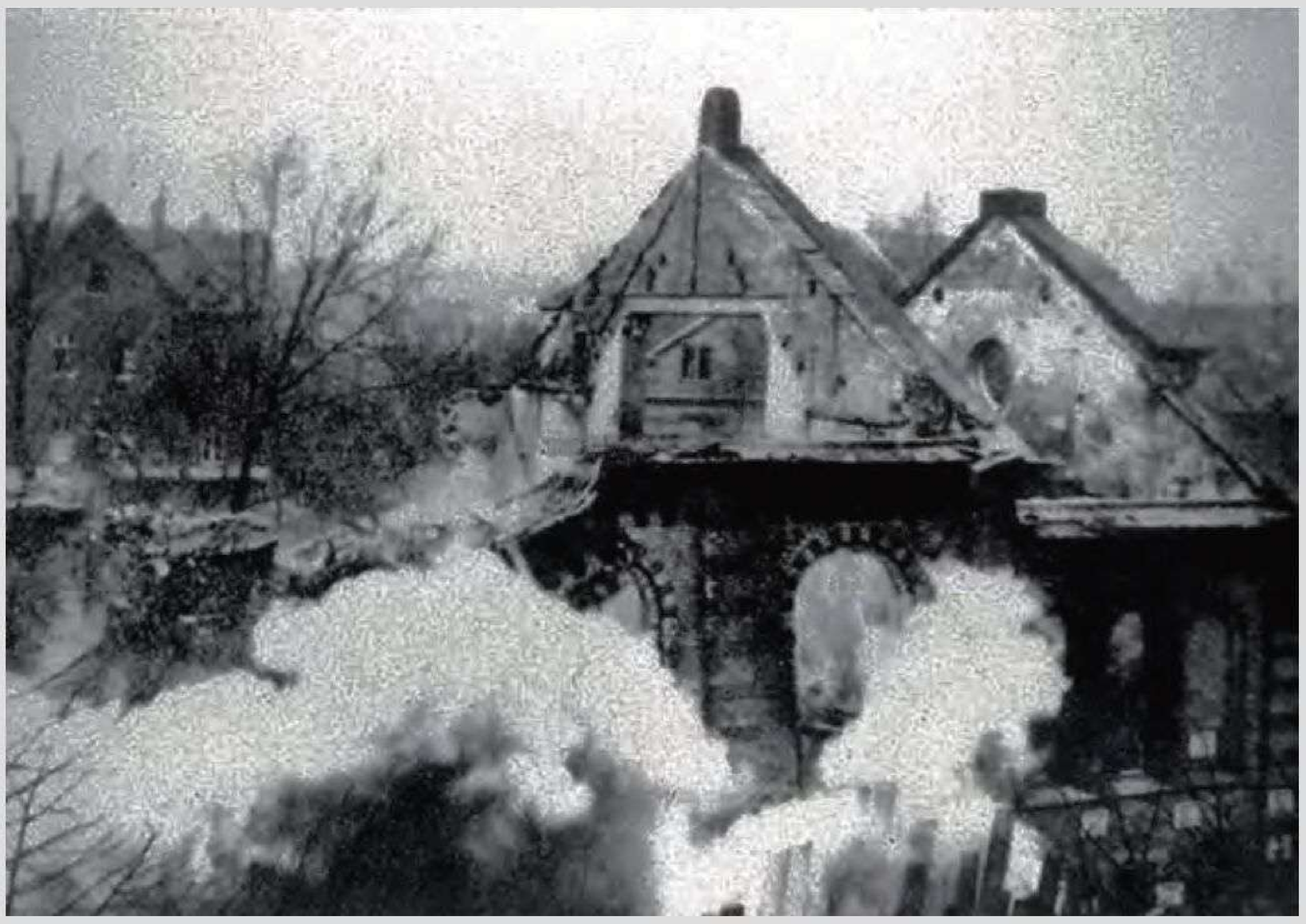
Amid the chaos and overarching fear, however, there were those whose convictions led them to heroic acts of defiance against the Nazi pogrom, those inside Germany and the occupied territories and elsewhere that risked their own lives to save others. Many of these individuals did, indeed, sacrifice themselves. Others lived to tell their stories of harrowing escape, deception, and humanity that startled the post-war world.

THE HOLOCAUST

1940 - 1945

BELOW In this horrific image of the Holocaust from 1942, a woman holds her child close on the barren steppe of Ivangorod, Ukraine, as a German soldier takes aim. Public Domain



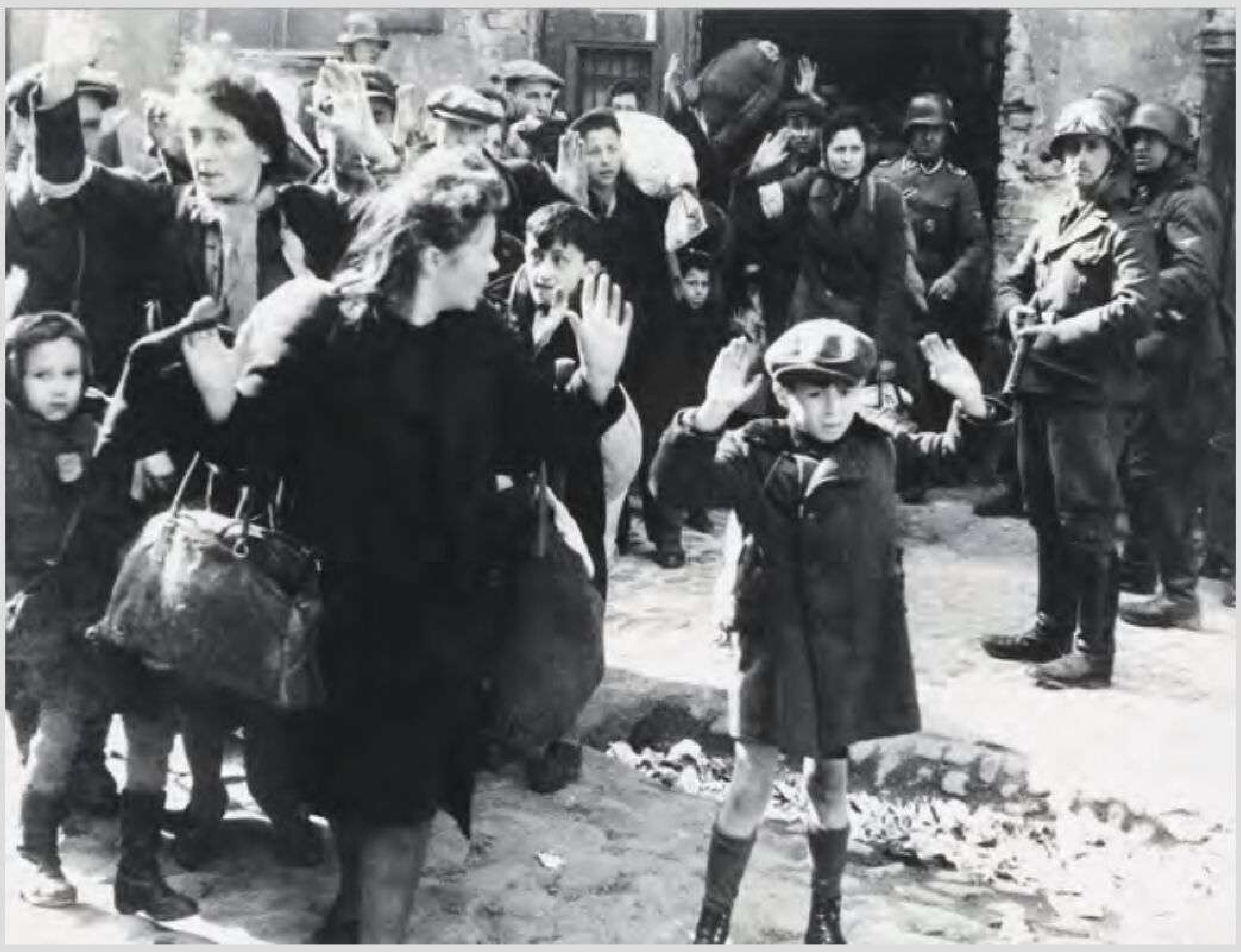


ABOVE Smoke billows from a blazing Jewish synagogue in Eisenach, Thuringia, set afire on the night of November 9, 1938, Kristallnacht, during the Nazi pogrom against the Jews. Public Domain

Still, during those dark days of Nazi oppression, the Jews suffered on a scale that was virtually unimaginable. At first, they were abused and deported, but as the Nazi era wore on, they were sent to labour and extermination camps whose names exist in infamy today, Auschwitz, Buchenwald, Sobibor, and Majdanek, for example. When the 'Final Solution' turned to murder, mobile killing vans into which victims were packed and then asphyxiated with exhaust fumes were introduced. Others were sometimes forced to dig their own grave pits and then summarily shot by German soldiers. On the Eastern Front, Einsatsgruppen, killing squads, followed the German Army into occupied territories and executed Jews and others on the spot.

Eventually, the Nazis' victims were sent to death factories, where gas chambers were employed to kill with Teutonic efficiency and their bodies burned in ovens at adjacent crematories, blazing day and night, filling the air with an acrid stench as black clouds of death stained the skies. Images of the Holocaust are gut wrenching, a terrified boy waiting to board a train to a concentration camp under the watchful eyes of Nazi guards, a woman clutching her child on a barren steppe while a German soldier takes aim.

Nevertheless, those heroes of the Holocaust that risked everything to help Jews, young and old, escape death at the hands of the Nazis, provided a glimmer of hope emanating from the darkest of days and offered a lesson for all time. These are the stories of but a few of them – those who sought survival and were true to their convictions to fight against an evil the likes of which the world had not seen before or since.



ABOVE With his hands in the air, a terrified Polish boy emerges from hiding in Warsaw along with dozens of other Jews while German soldiers hold rifles at the ready. Public Domain

RAOUL WALLENBERG

August 4, 1912 – July 17, 1947 (est.)

Swedish Diplomatic Service | Righteous Among The Nations; Congressional Gold Medal; honorary citizenship of Israel, United Kingdom, Australia, Canada, and Hungary

ABOVE Swedish diplomat Raoul Wallenberg rescued thousands of Jews while serving in Budapest, Hungary, during World War Two. Public Domain

A SWEDISH diplomat, Wallenberg was appointed legation secretary of the Swedish diplomatic mission in the Hungarian capital of Budapest in June 1944. Through to the end of the year, Wallenberg issued Swedish passports and procured buildings that were designated as 'Swedish Houses' to shelter Jews and prevent them from falling into the clutches of the Nazis and sympathetic Hungarian Fascists. Wallenberg had the special passports printed in yellow and blue, the national colours of neutral Sweden, and persuaded the Hungarian Foreign Ministry to allow 4,500 of them to be produced. Wallenberg ignored this quota and printed many more.

Although the exact number of Jews that Wallenberg was able to save is not known, estimates approach tens of thousands. Wallenberg enlisted the help of other members of the Swedish diplomatic corps and expanded his operation substantially as the situation became more desperate. In the autumn of 1944, the Nazis issued a decree requiring Hungarian Jews to march out of the country on foot. In response, Wallenberg worked to minimise their suffering, issuing more passports, and distributing food and medicines as he was able. Late in the war, Wallenberg began issuing passports that bore only his signature in an official capacity, allowing many more Jews to escape the Nazis amid the confusion.

RAOUL WALLENBERG
ACT of CONGRESS 2012
HERO of HEROES

ABOVE An act of the US Congress established the Raoul Wallenberg Congressional Gold Medal in 2012. Public Domain

In January 1945, the Soviet Red Army entered Budapest, and Wallenberg was taken into custody by the communists for reasons that remain unclear to this day. He was never seen again and is believed to have died in Soviet custody in the summer of 1947. However, Soviet authorities asserted that Wallenberg was not in the Soviet Union despite the reports that emerged in the 1950s from former prisoners who stated that they had seen the Holocaust hero in prison in Moscow. Wallenberg's fate remains one of the enduring mysteries of World War Two. His legacy, though, remains in the many honours he has since received, and the efforts of organisations dedicated to human rights that follow his selfless example.

JAN KARSKI

April 24, 1914 – July 13, 2000

Polish Government-in-Exile | Silver Cross of the Virtuti Militari (2); Order of the White Eagle; Home Army Cross; Presidential Medal of Freedom; Righteous Among The Nations

ABOVE Jan Karski (left) speaks with General Colin Powell during the opening of the United States Holocaust Museum in 1993. Public Domain

JAN KARSKI, born Jan Kozielewski, was a Polish resistance fighter and courier for the Polish government-in-exile during World War Two. He was among the first to report the Nazi atrocities being committed against Jews in Poland to the exiled government, as well as to the governments of Britain and the United States.

In 1935, Karski received a degree in law and diplomatic science from the University of Lwow, and during the late 1930s he served in diplomatic roles in Germany, Britain, and Switzerland. While serving with the Polish Army in September 1939, he was captured by the Soviet Red Army. Two months later, he escaped and joined the Polish resistance. He possessed a photographic memory and was soon employed as a courier between the resistance and the exiled government, as well as the Western Allies. In the autumn of 1942, Karski was asked to deliver a report on the plight of the Jews in Poland.

Smuggled into the Warsaw Ghetto, Karski, a Roman Catholic, witnessed scenes of indescribable suffering. “I saw a man with blank eyes,” he later wrote. “I asked, ‘What is he doing?’ The guide whispered” ‘He’s just dying.’” In disguise, Karski also visited a concentration camp in eastern Poland, where mass murders were taking place. In November 1942, he reported his experience to the British government, and in July 1943, he met with President Franklin D. Roosevelt in Washington, D.C. and described the extermination of the Polish Jews. However, the reports did not stir the Allied powers to action as Karski had hoped.

Karski later remarked: “I wanted to save millions, and I was not able to save one man.” After World War Two, he emigrated to the United States and taught at Georgetown University for decades.

ABOVE Jews are loaded aboard trains for transportation from the Warsaw Ghetto to an extermination camp. Jan Karski witnessed such appalling scenes. Public Domain

OSKAR SCHINDLER

April 28, 1908 – October 9, 1974

German citizen | Righteous Among The Nations; Holocaust Memorial Council Medal of Remembrance

A GERMAN businessman, industrialist and member of the Nazi Party, Oskar Schindler is among the best-known heroes of the Holocaust. His efforts on behalf of the Jews who worked in his business enterprises became the subject of the 1993 Steven Spielberg film *Schindler’s List*, which won seven Academy Awards.

Born in Svitavy, Moravia, Schindler was an ethnic German and Roman Catholic. He served in the Czech Army in the 1930s and worked with the German Office of Military Foreign Intelligence. He joined the Nazi Party in February 1939. In November, he purchased a formerly Jewish-owned enamelware factory in Svitavy, Poland, and named it German Enamelware Factory Oskar Schindler, commonly called Emalia. Although he owned two other factories, at Emalia he employed workers from the Krakow Ghetto.

The workers from the ghetto, transferred after its liquidation in 1943 to the Plaszow concentration camp, were subjected to the brutal treatment of their Nazi guards, but Schindler regularly intervened to protect them. He added an armaments production division at Emalia to provide the workers with ‘essential’ status. At any given time, more than 1,000 Jews were employed at Emalia, and Schindler sometimes allowed the workers to remain at the factory to avoid ill treatment.

CORRIE TEN BOOM

April 15, 1892 – April 15, 1983

Dutch Civilian | Righteous Among The Nations; Dutch Knighthood

THE TEN Boom family of Haarlem, Netherlands, were devout Christians and followers of the Dutch Reformed Church, an organisation that criticized the early Nazi persecution of the Jews. Prior to World War Two, generations of the family had already been engaged with the Jewish community in their hometown, including efforts to improve relations between Christians and Jews in the 19th century and later to convert Jews to Christianity.

The ten Boom family regularly cited their religious beliefs as motivation for aiding the Jews who fled Nazi oppression, and several became resistance fighters after the Nazi occupation of their country in 1940. Corrie, along with her father Casper and sister Betsie, became directly involved in hiding Jews from the Nazis after deciding to offer shelter to refugees in their home. Corrie, a watchmaker by trade, established contacts with the resistance, and a hidden living space, which could accommodate six people, was constructed behind a wall in her bedroom. The family’s efforts are believed to have saved the lives of at least 800 Jews.

However, a Dutch informant betrayed the ten Booms, and their home was raided by the Gestapo on February 28, 1944.

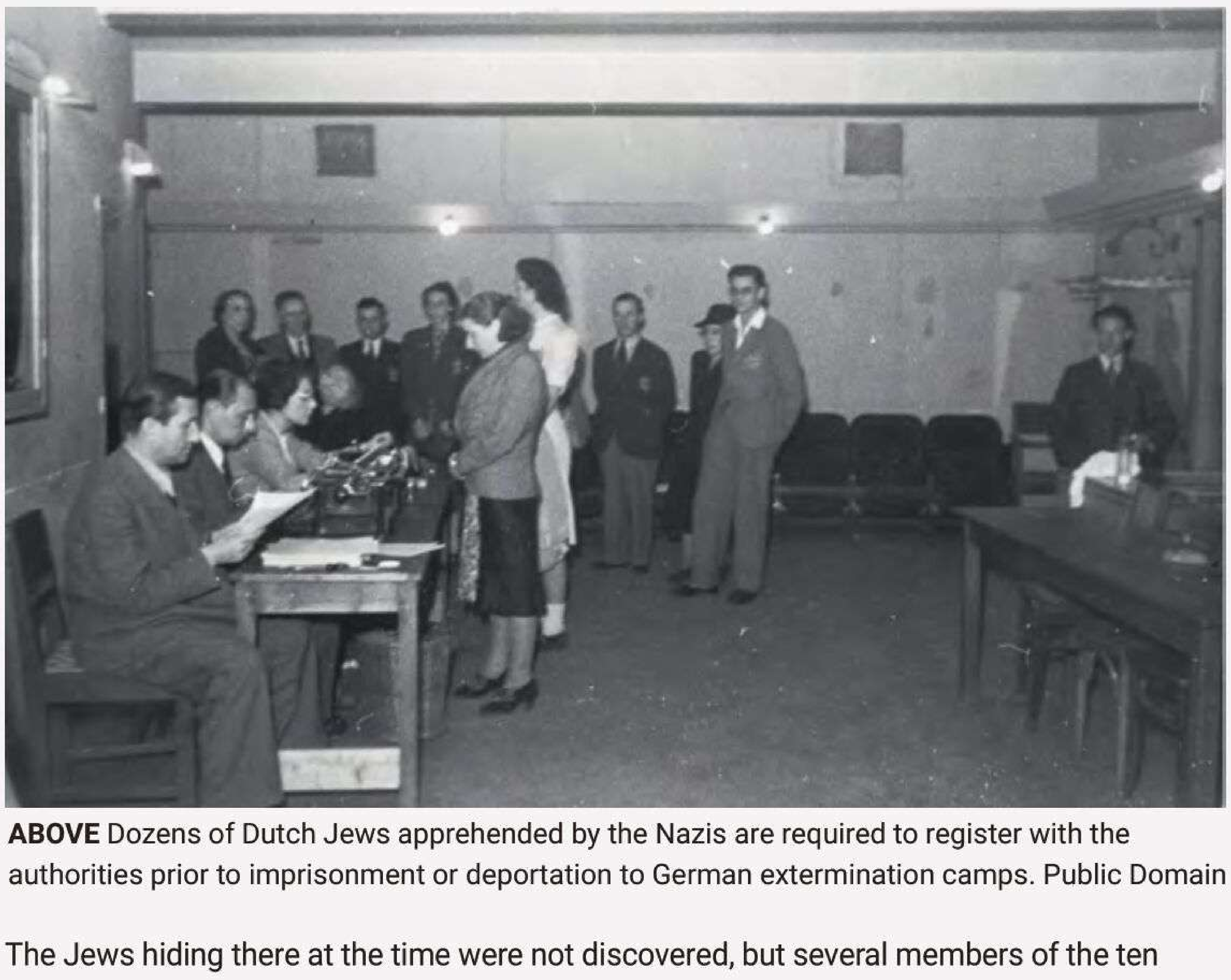
ABOVE A German businessman and member of the Nazi Party, Oskar Schindler worked to save the lives of approximately 1,200 Jews in his employ. **Public Domain**

ABOVE Oskar Schindler's factory at Brünnlitz is shown in this modern photograph. Schindler utilised the facility to save hundreds of Jews from death in concentration camps. **Public Domain**

Schindler protected the Jews in his employ at great personal risk; he was arrested three times but never brought to trial. In October 1944, following the transfer of the workers from the Krakow Ghetto to Plaszow, Schindler was allowed to relocate his factory to Brünnlitz, Moravia, to concentrate solely on ammunition manufacturing. An associate compiled several versions of a list of workers with skills necessary to operate the facility, and these together are known to history as 'Schindler's List'. Designated a subcamp of the Gross-Rosen concentration camp, the Brünnlitz enterprise saved approximately 1,200 men and women.

During eight months of operation, Brünnlitz produced virtually no actual ammunition. Production figures were falsified, and the Jewish workers spared in the process. After his death, individuals who owed their lives to Schindler and a group of their descendants succeeded in locating his burial place to Jerusalem.

ABOVE Dutch heroine Corrie ten Boom and her family sheltered hundreds of Jews from Nazi deportation in the city of Haarlem. **Public Domain**



ABOVE Dozens of Dutch Jews apprehended by the Nazis are required to register with the authorities prior to imprisonment or deportation to German extermination camps. Public Domain

The Jews hiding there at the time were not discovered, but several members of the ten Boom family were arrested, along with resistance fighters and others who had come to the house that day. Altogether, 30 people were taken into custody. After a short time, only three members of the ten Boom family, Corrie, her father, and Betsie, remained in prison. Casper died only 10 days after his arrest. In November 1944, Corrie and Betsie were transferred to the Ravensbrück concentration camp in Germany. Betsie died there a month later.

Corrie was released from Ravensbrück in December 1944, possibly due to a clerical error, and after the war became a world famous Christian evangelist and author of an acclaimed book, *The Hiding Place*.

MONSIGNOR HUGH O'FLAHERTY

February 28, 1898
– October 30, 1963

Roman Catholic Church
| Commander of the British Empire (CBE); Medal of Freedom with Silver Palm

IRISH-BORN Monsignor Hugh O'Flaherty had intended to serve with the Archdiocese of Cape Town but remained in Rome following his ordination as a priest of the Roman Catholic Church, working as a chamberlain for Pope Piux XII. He further held several diplomatic positions for the Vatican and following the outbreak of World War Two, he toured prisoner of war camps in Italy, gathering personal information to reassure families of the missing via Radio Vatican broadcasts.

Deeply affected by the horrors of the war, O'Flaherty established a network of priests, Vatican workers, diplomats, and government officials across the city of Rome in an effort to shelter Jews, escaped prisoners of war, Allied soldiers, and refugees attempting to flee the Italian Fascists and their Nazi cohorts. During the course of the war, O'Flaherty is credited with saving the lives of approximately 6,500 people, including Roman Jews who were being rounded up for transport to concentration camps. O'Flaherty walked the streets of Rome bearing falsified Vatican identification papers to observe and initiate rescue operations. He earned the nickname of the 'Scarlet Pimpernel of the Vatican'.

Continually under the surveillance of the Nazi Gestapo, O'Flaherty was identified as the leader of the sheltering effort. However, he was untouchable as long as he remained within the confines of the neutral Vatican. The authorities painted a white line on the street across St. Peter's Square and posted sentries to arrest the monsignor if he was seen beyond the Vatican boundary. O'Flaherty eluded every Gestapo attempt to capture him and wore disguises when venturing across the white line.

After the war, SS Obersturmbannführer Herbert Kappler, head of the SS and Gestapo in Rome and O'Flaherty's primary nemesis, was convicted of war crimes and sentenced to life in prison. The monsignor visited Kappler regularly, and the prisoner converted to Catholicism in 1959. O'Flaherty conducted the baptism.

"GOD HAS NO COUNTRY"

ABOVE This memorial to Monsignor Hugh O'Flaherty was erected in Killarney, Ireland, where he grew up. Creative Commons

KAPPLER
Herbert
KAPPLER
Herbert

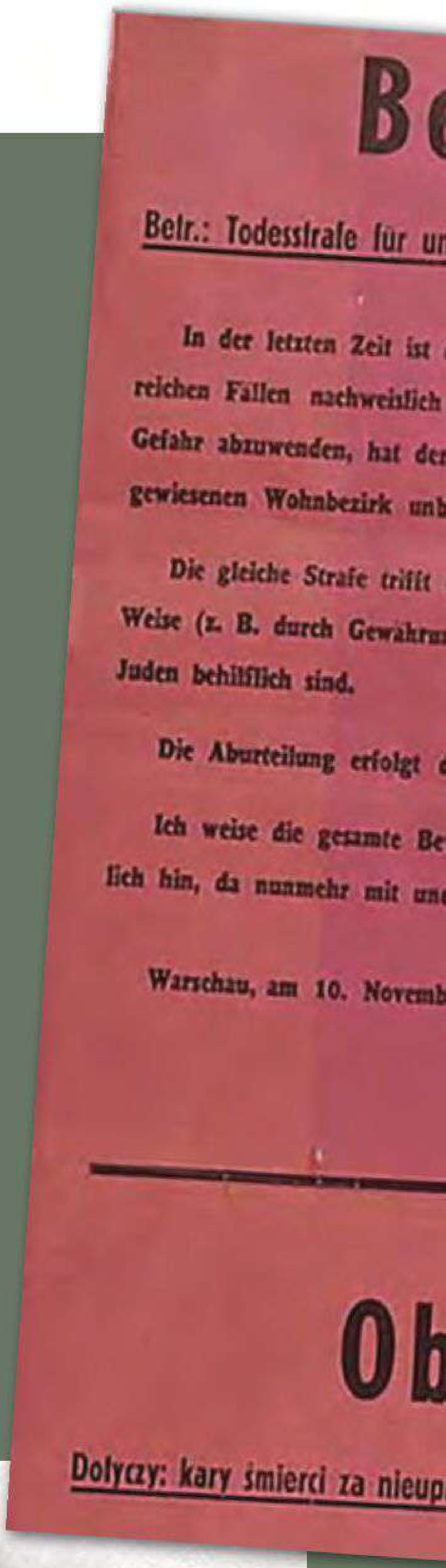
ABOVE Nazi Herbert Kappler failed to apprehend Monsignor Hugh O'Flaherty and later converted to Catholicism. Public Domain

IRENA SENDLER

February 15, 1910
– May 12, 2008

Warsaw City Administration
| Righteous Among The Nations; Gold Cross of Merit

IN THE mid-1930s, Irena Sendler accepted a position with the Department of Social Welfare in the Polish capital of Warsaw. When the Nazis and Soviets invaded Poland in 1939, Sendler continued to function within the government framework to assist disadvantaged citizens. After the Nazis sealed the Warsaw Ghetto in November 1940, she became acutely aware of the plight of the Jews, whose daily lives were significantly restricted.



Be

Betr.: Todesstrafe für un

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reichen Fällen nachweislich
Gefahr abzuwenden, hat der
gewiesenen Wohnbezirk unb

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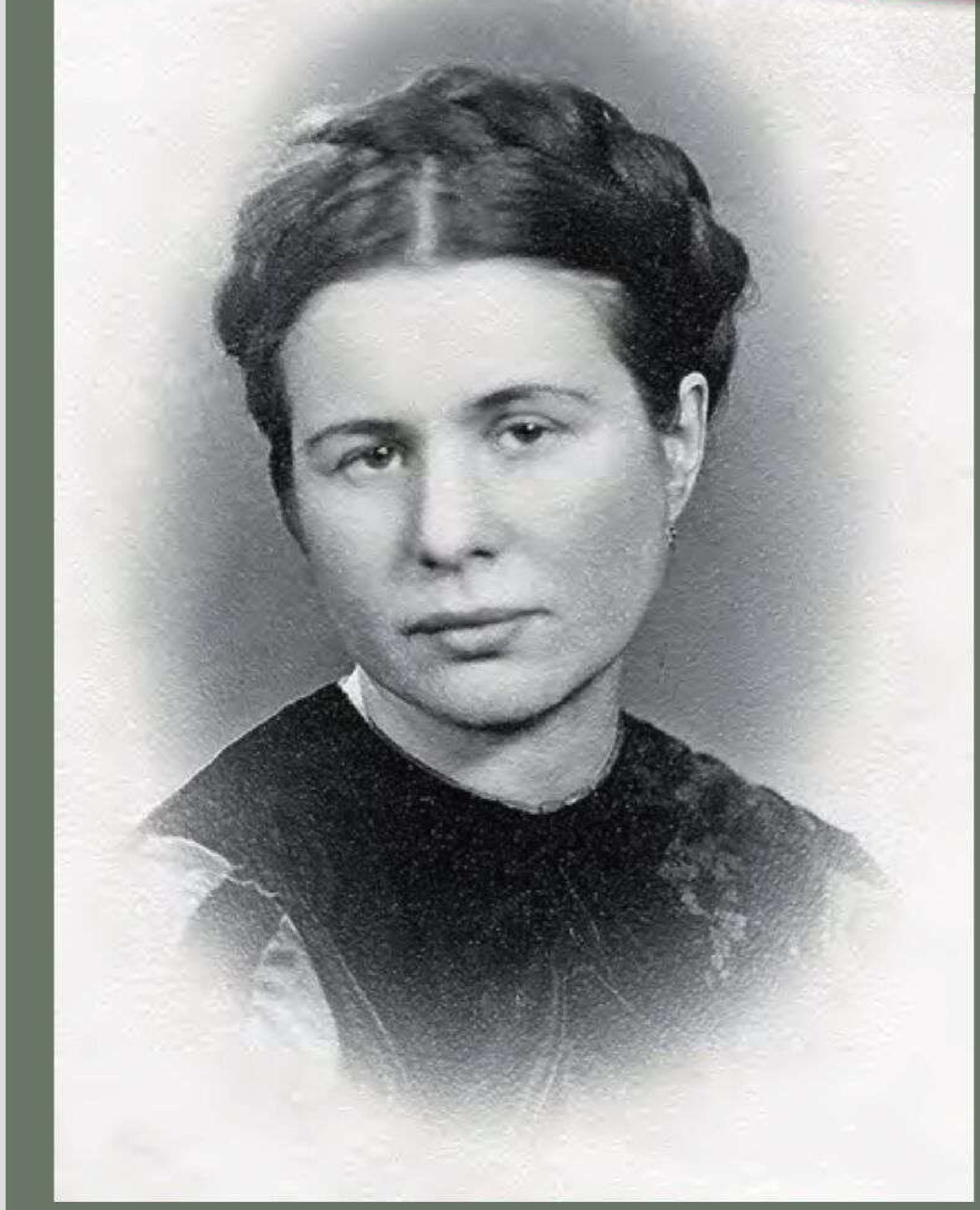
Weise (z. B. durch Gewährun
Juden behilflich sind.

Die Aburteilung erfolgt
Ich weise die gesamte Be
lich hin, da nunmehr mit un

Warschau, am 10. Novemb

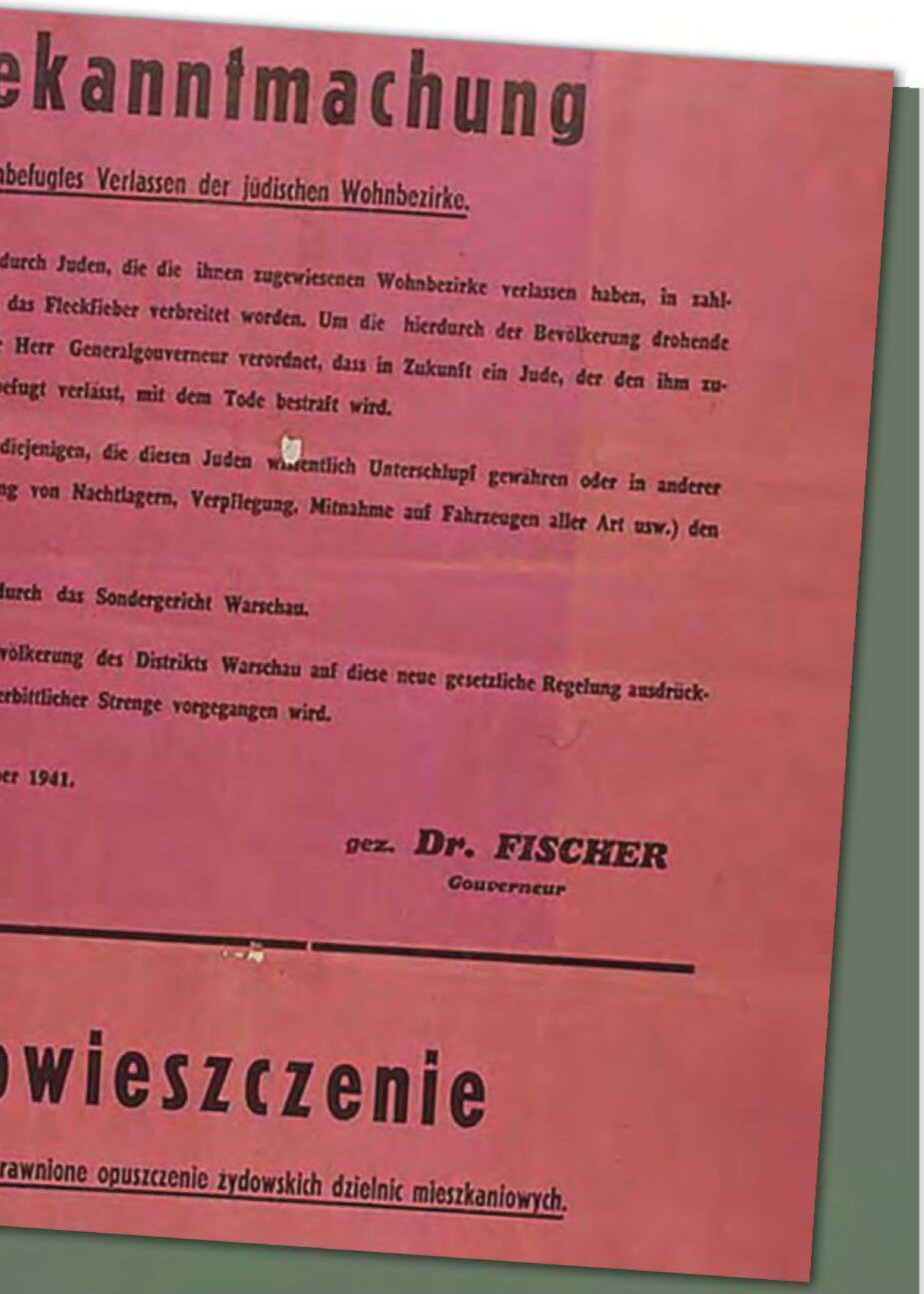
Ob

Dotyczy: kary śmierci za nieup



ABOVE A municipal worker in the Polish capital, Irena Sendler helped thousands of Jews escape the Warsaw Ghetto. Public Domain

Sendler obtained permission to tour the Warsaw Ghetto, observing the rampant disease, starvation, and abuse of its approximately 400,000 residents. She established liaison activities with Jewish leaders and activists within the ghetto and initiated relief efforts, helping Jews to escape the ghetto and finding safe houses for them in the city of Warsaw. After observing the mass deportation of nearly 300,000 Jews from the ghetto to the Treblinka concentration camp in the autumn of 1942, Sendler, having adopted the nom de guerre of 'Jolanta', began working with the Zegota, the Council for Aid to Jews.



ekanntmachung

nbefugtes Verlassen der jüdischen Wohnbezirke.

durch Juden, die die ihnen zugewiesenen Wohnbezirke verlassen haben, in zahl-
das Fleckfieber verbreitet worden. Um die hierdurch der Bevölkerung drohende
Herr Generalgouverneur verordnet, dass in Zukunft ein Jude, der den ihm zu-
efugt verlässt, mit dem Tode bestraft wird.

diejenigen, die diesen Juden wissentlich Unterschlupf gewähren oder in anderer
ng von Nachtlagern, Verpflegung, Mitnahme auf Fahrzeugen aller Art usw.) den

durch das Sondergericht Warschau.

völkerung des Distrikts Warschau auf diese neue gesetzliche Regelung ausdrück-
erbittlicher Strenge vorgegangen wird.

er 1941.

gez. Dr. FISCHER
Gouverneur

owieszczenie

rawnione opuszczenie żydowskich dzielnic mieszkaniowych.

ABOVE This notice was publicly posted as a warning from the Nazis to those who provided aid to Jews in the Warsaw Ghetto. Translated it reads:
Announcement
Regarding: Death penalty for illegally leaving the Jewish residential district.
Recently, in many documented instances, Jews, who have left the residential districts designated for them, have spread typhus. To safeguard the population against this dangerous threat, the General Governor has ordered that any Jew, who in the future illegally leaves the residential district designated for him, will be punished by death.
The same punishment will apply to whoever consciously shelters Jews mentioned above or in any other way assists them (for instance, by providing overnight accommodation, or sustenance, by giving a ride in any kind of vehicle, etc.)
The sentence will be imposed by the Special Court in Warsaw.
I explicitly draw the attention of the whole population of the Warsaw District to this new regulation since henceforth it will be applied with merciless severity.
Warsaw, 10 November 1941
Signed Dr Fischer Governor.

After the Warsaw Ghetto was razed in mid-1943, Sendler was given a leadership role with the Zegota's Department for the Care of Jewish Children. She utilised contacts with the city administration and the Catholic Church to place children in homes and orphanages in several locations.

Sendler was under close surveillance by the Nazi Gestapo, and her arrest in October 1943 was followed swiftly with the pronouncement of a death sentence. She had been able to destroy or hide information that might incriminate others involved in her work with Jewish children, and fellow activists managed to bribe German officials and secure her release from prison in February 1944. Despite great personal risk, she continued her clandestine activities. After the war, she remained active with the Polish government for decades.

FRANCIS EDWARD 'FRANK' FOLEY

November 24, 1884 – May 8, 1958

British Secret Intelligence Service | Righteous Among The Nations; British Hero of the Holocaust; Order of St. Olaf Knight's Cross; Companion of the Order of St. Michael and St. George

ABOVE This statue honouring Frank Foley and his work to save Jews through the British Secret Intelligence Service stands in Highbridge, Somerset. Creative Commons

A VETERAN of World War One Mentioned in Despatches for meritorious service, Francis Edward 'Frank' Foley, served as an agent of the British Secret Intelligence Service (MI6) and as the passport control officer with the British Embassy in Berlin, Germany, from 1922 to 1939, a critical period from the rise of the Nazi Party to the outbreak of World War Two. While he was responsible for recruiting and establishing a network of British spies, Foley also witnessed the growing wave of Nazi-sponsored anti-Semitism in Germany and experienced a surge of passport requests from individuals seeking to leave the country for Palestine, Britain, or other areas of the British Empire.

Horrified by the destruction and loss of life during Kristallnacht, the Night of Broken Glass, on November 9, 1938, Foley stepped up his efforts to accommodate applicants, many of whom were referred by the Palestine Office of the Jewish Agency or the Aid Society of German Jewry. The rules for obtaining British passports were restrictive, and Foley raised the ire of others in the Foreign Office by issuing more than 10,000 documents allowing Jews to reach safety in Palestine. Through associates with contacts inside the Gestapo, Foley was even able to grant passports and the release of individuals already held in concentration camps.

Foley did not hold diplomatic immunity, and his covert activities would have resulted in imprisonment or death had the Nazis been made aware. During the mid-1930s, Foley began allowing Jews to shelter in his own apartment for brief periods to avoid discovery and deportation to concentration camps. Among those he personally assisted was Leo Baeck, chairman of the Association of German Rabbis. With the outbreak of World War Two, Foley was required to leave Germany; however, he left a large number of pre-approved passport documents intended for individuals seeking to escape from the Nazis.

The extent of Foley's work was revealed in testimony during the post-war trials of Nazi war criminals. He is believed to have assisted tens of thousands of Jews.

ABOVE During the wave of violence that swept across Germany on Kristallnacht, this Berlin synagogue was destroyed. Frank Foley was appalled at the destruction and loss of life. Public Domain

ABOVE Witold Pilecki is shown prior to World War Two in the uniform of a Polish cavalry officer. Public Domain

WITOLD PILECKI

May 13, 1901 – May 25, 1948

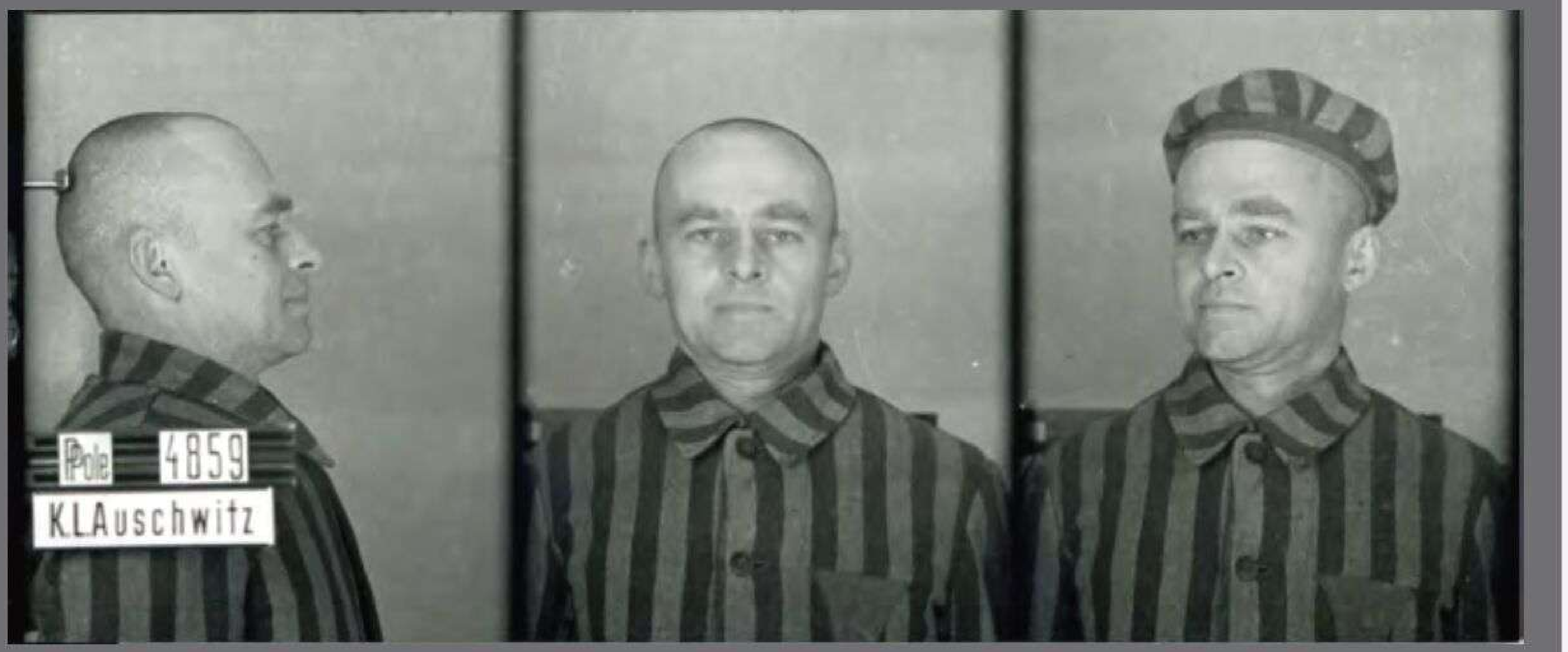
Polish Army | Order of the White Eagle; Order of Polonia Restituta; Cross of Valour; Silver Cross of Merit

A VETERAN of the Polish-Soviet War of the early 1920s, Witold Pilecki was a cavalry platoon commander when World War Two broke out on September 1, 1939. With the fall of Poland, he opted to join the resistance rather than proceed to the West and became a founding member of the Secret Polish Army. The following year, he volunteered to enter a concentration camp, allowing himself to be captured by the Nazis and sent to Auschwitz with the clandestine mission to establish a resistance movement within the camp.

While directing the resistance movement at Auschwitz, which involved hundreds of inmates, Pilecki compiled reports and observations of the horrific atrocities perpetrated by the Nazis against the camp population, principally Jews. The reports were smuggled to the Home Army, the largest of numerous Polish resistance groups, and made their way to the West, although no specific action was taken by the Western Allies as a result.

Pilecki managed to escape from Auschwitz on the night of April 26, 1943, and after reaching Warsaw in August he prepared an extensive report of the resistance activities in the camp along with his recollections of the murderous Nazi activities there, intending to persuade the Home Army to attack the camp and liberate its inmates. However, the Home Army command declined.

During the Warsaw Uprising, Pilecki fought against the Germans in the Polish capital, commanding the 1st 'Warszawianka' Company. When the Uprising failed, he was captured by the Germans and imprisoned in Bavaria until his liberation in 1945. After the war, Pilecki served the pro-Western Polish government-in-exile and gathered intelligence in Warsaw while working under several assumed identities. He was captured by the Soviets and tortured but refused to compromise other agents. Following a show trial in the spring of 1948, he was executed at Mokotów Prison with a single gunshot to the back of the head.



ABOVE The German masters of Auschwitz took these images of Witold Pilecki while he was imprisoned there. They didn't know he was there with the objective of establishing an internal resistance. Public Domain

NICHOLAS WINTON

May 19, 1909 – July 1, 2015

British Humanitarian | Member of the Order of the British Empire; Wallenberg Medal; Order of Tomas Garrigue Masaryk, Fourth Class

ON MARCH 14, 1939, a day before the German Army occupied the Czech provinces of Bohemia and Moravia, an aircraft with Jewish children as passengers departed Prague for London. The organiser of the effort was a British stockbroker, Nicholas Winton, born Nicholas Wertheimer in West Hampstead, England, to parents of German-Jewish ancestry.

ABOVE Nicholas Winton organised a transport programme to evacuate Jewish children from Czechoslovakia to Britain as the Nazis took control of the country. Creative Commons Li-sung

CARL LUTZ

March 30, 1895 – February 12, 1975

Swiss Diplomatic Corps | Righteous Among The Nations; Cross of Honor, Order of Merit

A SWISS diplomat who served as vice-consul at the embassy in Budapest, Hungary, from 1942 to 1945, Carl Lutz led the largest operation to rescue imperilled European Jews in World War Two. Through his efforts, approximately 62,000 Jews were allowed to leave Nazi-occupied territory.

Lutz was assigned to Budapest in January 1942 and took responsibility for the diplomatic relations of several countries, including the United States and Great Britain, which had severed direct political ties with pro-Nazi Hungary. After the German Army occupied Hungary in the spring of 1944, deportations of Hungarian Jews to concentration camps began in earnest. Unable to persuade the Hungarian government to stop the removal of the country's Jews, Lutz approved four certificates of emigration to Palestine (Aliyah), each for 1,000 persons. Later, he expanded the certificates to include not only individuals, but also their families, allowing many more people to reach safety.

ABOVE This statue of Nicholas Winton and Czech Jewish children by sculptor Flor Kent was unveiled at the Prague Railway Station in 2009. **Creative Commons**

Winton was baptised into the Anglican Church as a child, but his Jewish ancestry prevented post-World War Two recognition as Righteous Among The Nations. Nevertheless, his work to save 669 Jewish children from the horrors of Nazi concentration camps is most worthy of remembrance. In the autumn of 1938, Winton visited refugee camps in the Czech Sudetenland, and he was disturbed by the brutality of Kristallnacht. Convinced that war was imminent, he assembled a small group of trusted advisors to rescue Jewish children in Czechoslovakia, modelling the effort after another successful program, Kindertransport.

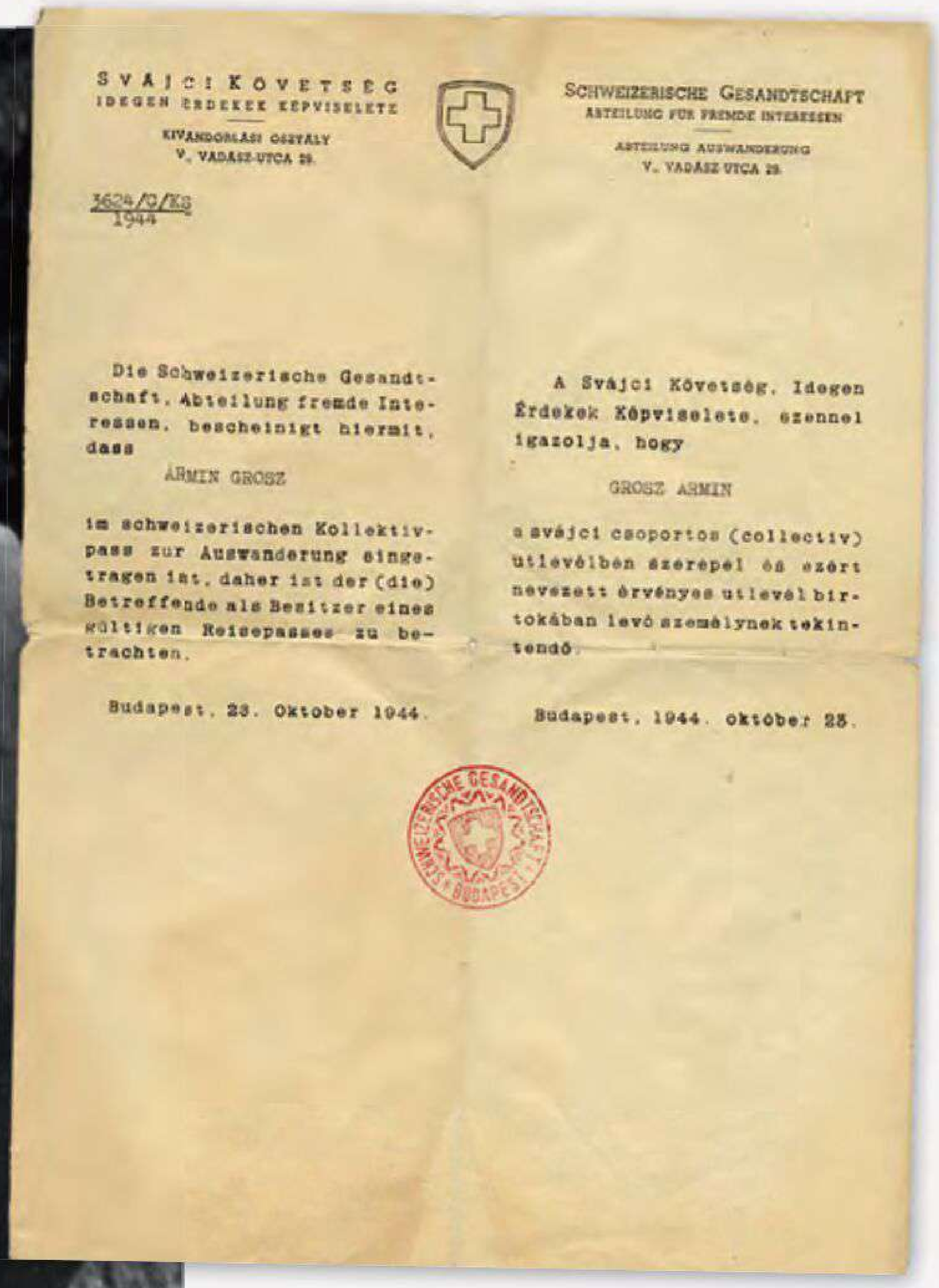
Establishing the British Committee for Refugees from Czechoslovakia, Winton took applications in a Prague hotel room from thousands of parents wishing to help their children leave the occupied country. He later returned to London to solicit donations to finance the rescue operation. In addition to the airlift, seven other missions to evacuate Jewish children were undertaken by Winton associates. The children were moved by rail across Germany, to the English Channel coast, and then reached Britain by ship. The last such departure took place on August 2, 1939, a month before the outbreak of war.

For a half century after World War Two, Winton's efforts on behalf of Jewish children were virtually unknown. His wife discovered a scrapbook in 1988, and its contents included names and photographs of many of the rescued children. Subsequently, Winton was made an honorary citizen of Czechoslovakia and received a letter of thanks from Ezer Weizman, former President of Israel.

An estimated 50,000 Jews were placed under the protection of the Swiss embassy in Hungary by 1944, their status supported by official letters. Young Zionist activists are known to have produced approximately 100,000 more forged letters of protection. German authorities became aware of the forgeries and required Lutz and contemporary Swiss diplomat Raoul Wallenberg to separate the legitimate papers from the false. Lutz reluctantly did so but leased several buildings in Budapest to shelter 3,000 Jews, and only six of these individuals died.

At the end of 1944, Hungarian Jews were rounded up and ordered to march to the Austrian frontier, no doubt for later extermination. Lutz saved as many of these Jews as possible, removing them from crowds setting out on the journey and returning them to Budapest, where they were sheltered. After the war, Lutz was initially condemned by the Swiss government for endangering the nation's neutrality; however, he was later honoured by his countrymen.

RIGHT Carl Lutz, a Swiss diplomat in Hungary, was responsible for the largest operation to rescue persecuted Jews during World War Two. **Creative Commons**



SVÁJCI KÖVETSÉG
IDEGEN ÉRDEKEK KÉPVISELETE
KIVÁNDORLÁSI OSZTÁLY
V., VADÁSZ-UTCA 29.

SCHWEIZERISCHE GESANDTSCHAFT
ABTEILUNG FÜR FREMDE INTERESSEN
ABTEILUNG AUSWANDERUNG
V., VADÁSZ-UTCA 29.

3624/G/KS
1944

Die Schweizerische Gesandtschaft, Abteilung fremde Interessen, bescheinigt hiermit, dass

ÁRMIN GROSZ

im schweizerischen Kollektivpass zur Auswanderung eingetragen ist, daher ist der (die) Betreffende als Besitzer eines gültigen Reisepasses zu betrachten.

Budapest, 23. Oktober 1944.

A Svájci Követség, Idegen Érdekek Képviselete, ezennel igazolja, hogy

GROSZ ÁRMIN

a svájci csoportos (collectiv) útlevélben szerepel és ezért nevezett érvényes útlevél birtokában levő személynek tekintendő.

Budapest, 1944. október 23.

ABOVE A letter of protection such as this, issued by Carl Lutz, saved many Hungarian Jews from extermination. **Public Domain**

WHILE IT was clear that war was coming to the Far East, there was little Great Britain could do to protect its colonies whilst the war in Europe and North Africa blazed hot. Hong Kong was all but cut off by the Japanese occupation of large chunks of China, and so indefensible was the International Settlement in Shanghai that British and US troops had already been withdrawn. Singapore, the great garrison town of the Far East, possessed formidable naval defences, but its vulnerability to invasion from the landward side had been noted by the man now tasked with its defence, Lieutenant-General Arthur Percival, as far back as 1936.

Hopes were pinned on the United States coming to empire's aid, but the attack on Pearl Harbor which brought them into the war on December 7, 1941, was followed by an attack on the US-held Philippines, British-held Malaya (now Malaysia) and Borneo, and the Dutch East Indies (now Indonesia). These oil and rubber-rich holdings were vital to the Japanese war effort and the speed of the offensives left the US reeling.

On December 8, 1941, the Japanese invaded Thailand and after token resistance, the Thai government signed an armistice. Landings on the western coast of Malaya followed, with Japanese infantry moving rapidly through the hinterland on bicycles, supported by light tanks and screeching dive bombers. The defenders were soon knocked back, unable to do more than muster a fighting retreat down the peninsula to Singapore.

The British and Commonwealth troops, demoralised, divided, and lacking sufficient air support or artillery, capitulated on February 14, 1942. An estimated 130,000 British, Indian, Australian, and Malay soldiers became prisoners of war, subject to starvation, disease, torture, and back-breaking manual labour.

The combined American-British-Dutch-Australian (ABDA) Command disbanded shortly afterwards, and the theatre splintered under the Japanese wedge. India Command, later Southeast Asia Command, co-ordinated the British-led campaign to recover the lost empire, and Southwest Pacific Command, the US-led campaign to retake the Philippines and push onto the Japanese home islands.

The dense jungles and mountains of Burma (now Myanmar) had been deemed impervious to a land offensive, but again the Japanese advanced rapidly. Rangoon (now Yangon) was lost in March 1942 and defenders withdrew towards India. While Britain's wartime priorities in the west remained unchanged, Indian Commander-in-Chief General Sir Archibald Wavell had to fight smart. He concentrated on the coastal Arakan region of Burma, which could be supported by the sea and air, and sanctioned the Long Range Penetration Groups - also known as Chindits – which operated behind Japanese lines on missions of sabotage and subversion. The first Chindit expedition, *Operation Longcloth* (February – June 1943), was a costly experiment and the First Arakan Campaign (December 1942 – May 1943) ended in a Japanese counter-attack.

In 1943, the Japanese 15th Army struck at the British 14th Army positions in the Arakan at the Battle of the Admin Box (February 5 – 23, 1944) and pushed into India at the Battles of Imphal (March 8 – July 3, 1944) and Kohima (April 4 – June 22, 1944). These

SOUTHEAST ASIA

1941 - 1945

BELOW The invading Japanese Army celebrate their victory at Singapore's Empire Dockyard.
National Archives and Records Administration

ABOVE British Indian soldiers train for an amphibious landing with the Royal Indian Navy, December 1944. State Library Victoria

three bitter battles against overwhelming numbers were thrown back by the determination of the defenders, predominantly battalions of the British Indian Army. For the Japanese, this was a campaign too far – they urgently needed to crack open the supply depot on the Imphal Plain to feed and fuel the 15th Army.

Once the monsoon season had lifted, the 14th Army retook Arakan in a series of bold amphibious landings in December 1944 and crossed the Irrawaddy River in February 1945 and into northern and central Burma, pushing on to Mandalay, which fell in March 1945 in spite of Japanese resistance. Plans to reoccupy Malaya and Borneo were outpaced by events and on August 15, 1945, the Empire of Japan surrendered following the dropping of the Atomic bombs on Nagasaki and Hiroshima.

War Theatre #20 (India) TROOPS & PARATROOPS
(over)
Orig 4x5 neg (3029-41) rec'd October 1947 from
Hdq., 10th Combat Camera Unit, APO #465.
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67575AC

ABOVE Men of the second Chindit force train in gliders ahead of *Operation Thursday*, December 1943. National Archives and Records Administration

LIEUTENANT GEORGE ALBERT CAIRNS

December 12, 1913 - March 19, 1944.

British Army | Victoria Cross

DESPITE THE high price paid in blood for the first Chindit expedition in Burma, Major General Orde Wingate's ardour wasn't dampened. Supported by US airpower, the Chindits were tasked to sever the Japanese lines of communication and unleash destruction in North Burma. Joining them for *Operation Thursday* was Lieutenant George Cairns, Somerset Light Infantry, attached to the 1st South Staffordshire Regiment.

On the evening of March 16, 1944, the South Staffs dug in for the night at what had been designated 'White City Block' across a vital Japanese line of communication on the railroad to Mandalay. As the deep golden sun rose across the hills, the Chindits discovered to their horror that they had set up under the guns of a Japanese detachment atop nearby Pagoda Hill. At 11am, the Japanese attacked, and the South Staffs were ordered to take the plateau that formed the vital heart of their assault.

In the bloody close-quarter fighting for command of Pagoda Hill, Cairns was bayonetted twice in the side and then set upon by a Japanese officer who severed his left arm. Cairns shot the man dead with his revolver, but rather than keel over from shock, picked up the fallen officer's sword and began slashing at the enemy, killing, and wounding with abandon, before he finally collapsed from blood loss. He passed away two days later.

Although the first Chindit VC chronologically, thanks to the death in action of two of the necessary three witnesses to his valour and the loss of the recommendation papers in the plane crash that killed Wingate, it wasn't until 1949 that Cairns' award was finally gazetted.

LIEUTENANT COLONEL CHARLES GROVES WRIGHT ANDERSON

February 12, 1897
– November 11, 1988

Australian Army | Victoria Cross; Military Cross

ABOVE Lieutenant Colonel Charles Groves Wright Anderson pictured in 1949, at the start of his political career in Australia. **National Library of Australia**

The South African-born Anderson served in the King's African Rifles during the World War One and was awarded the Military Cross for campaigns in German East Africa (now Burundi, Rwanda, and Tanzania) and Portuguese East Africa (now Mozambique). Emigrating to Australia in 1930, Anderson joined the Citizen Military Forces (CMF) in 1939 and in July 1940 was seconded to the Australian Imperial Force (AIF).

By the time Japan entered the war, Anderson was lieutenant colonel commanding 2/19th Battalion AIF, fighting to arrest the Japanese advance down the rubber plantations of Malaya.

During the Battle of Muar (January 14-22, 1942), 1/19th AIF was supporting the 45th Indian Brigade when the 45th's HQ was bombed on January 19, leaving the CO concussed and his most senior officers dead. By now they were completely cut off by the rapid Japanese advance and Anderson took charge of the 45th Brigade and led them back towards the Allied lines. It wasn't just his clearheaded leadership in the very depths of defeat – lustily singing 'Waltzing Matilda' as he marched – but his personal valour and experience of jungle warfare. In one encounter, he led a bayonet charge against a roadblock, opening a gap in the Japanese encirclement that allowed his beleaguered band of Indians and Australians to slip through.

By January 23 they had reached friendly turf and although the fighting retreat had cost them dearly, Anderson was awarded the first Australian VC in the war against Japan. His citation read: "Throughout the fighting, which lasted for four days, he set a magnificent example of brave leadership, determination and outstanding courage. He not only showed fighting qualities of very high order but throughout exposed himself to danger without any regard for his own personal safety."

Taken prisoner during the fall of Singapore, Anderson remained unbeaten – standing up for his men against their goalers as they worked the murderous Burma railway. Freed in 1945, he returned to Australia and served three terms in the House of Representatives.

ABOVE The Australian 8th Division training for jungle warfare in Malaya prior to the Japanese invasion, 1941. **Australian Army Museum of Western Australia**

NAIK FAZAL DIN

July 1, 1921 – March 2, 1945

British Indian Army | Victoria Cross

WHILST THE Japanese concentrated their forces for a final defence of Mandalay, the Commonwealth manoeuvres in that direction were revealed to be a feint – a masterpiece of deception by the 14th Army's wily Lieutenant General William Slim. Instead, the 17th Indian Division led the attack to the south at the city of Meiktila, a vital communications and logistics hub. Once it fell, Mandalay – and central Burma – would be impossible to hold. The Battle of Meiktila (January 19 – March 29, 1945) became an ebb and flow of siege and counter-siege that saw the increasingly stretched Japanese crumple beneath Allied air and armour superiority. First, however, the network of bunkers and machine gun nests beneath the long shadow of Meiktila's pagodas had to be taken.

War Theatre #20 (India) TROOPS & PARATROOPS
(over)
Orig 4x5 neg (3029-35) rec'd October 1
Hq., 10th Combat Camera Unit, APO #46

A37526
72655A.C

ABOVE British reinforcements wait on the runway in India for their flight to Meiktila during the fierce battle for the city. National Archives and Records Administration

Naik (corporal) Fazal Din of the 7th Battalion, 10th Baluch Regiment was clearing bunkers with his section when a Japanese officer ran him through with his sword – the blade described as appearing from the soldier's back. Wrenching the blade from his attacker's hands, the fatally wounded Din killed his opponent and two more of the men attacking his comrades. Holding the sword aloft, he urged his comrades on with his last breaths before staggering to platoon HQ where he made his report and collapsed.

Recommended for the Victoria Cross, his citation marvelled that "Naik Fazal Din's action was seen by almost the whole platoon who, undoubtedly inspired by his gallantry and taking advantage of the bewilderment created amongst the enemy by the loss of its leaders, continued the attack and annihilated the garrison which numbered 55."

A37315
67573A.C

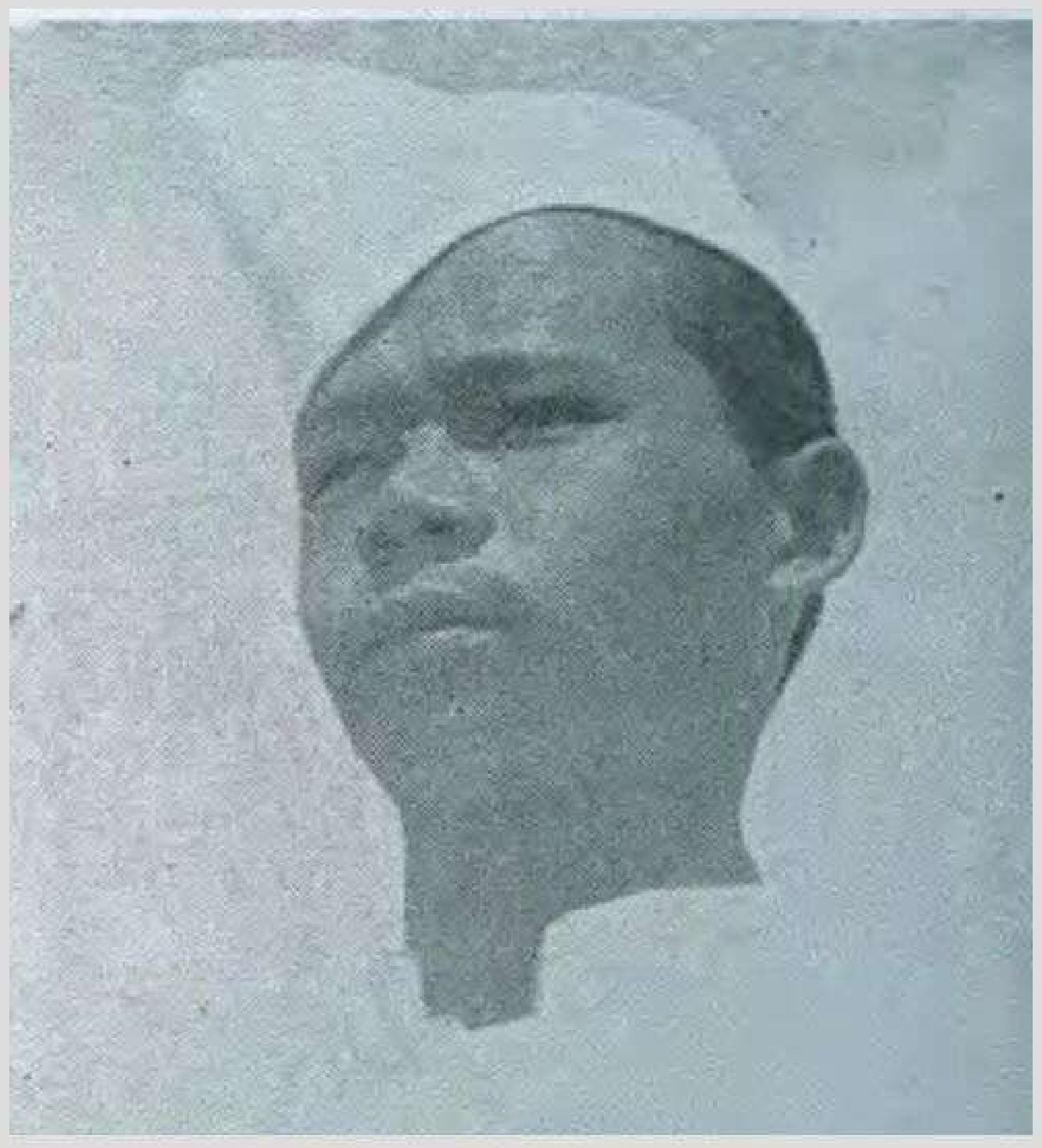
LEFT Men of the second Chindit force during training for *Operation Thursday*, December 1943. National Archives and Records Administration

BELOW Chindits watch approvingly as a US ground attack fighter hits Japanese targets in Burma, circa 1944. National Archives and Records Administration

RIFLEMAN LACHHIMAN GURUNG

December 30, 1917
– December 12, 2010

British Indian Army | Victoria Cross



ABOVE Rifleman Lachhiman Gurung, from the official divisional history, *Golden Arrow - The Story of the 7th Indian Division*.

DESPITE THE tide of war turning so thoroughly against them, the Japanese refused to yield Burma and the campaign dragged on with each bloody mile being contested in full. In May 1945, Rifleman Lachhiman Gurung and 4th Battalion, 8th Gurkha Rifles crossed the Irrawaddy River to cut off the Japanese retreat. Two companies of Gurkhas were detached in wait at the village of Taungdaw. Instead, it was the Gurkhas who were encircled and risked total slaughter.

In the early hours of May 12, 1945, over 200 Japanese soldiers descended on Taungdaw, with Gurung's forward position the rock against which this tide struck. Twice he successfully scooped up enemy grenades and hurled them back towards the enemy, but on the third attempt, it detonated in his hand. His right arm was useless, his fingers destroyed, he was blinded in his right eye, and he was wounded in his right leg and over his torso. Worse still were the two Gurkhas in the trench with him, who were incapacitated.

Ignoring his wounds as best he could, Gurung continued to load and fire his rifle left-handed, waiting until point-blank range before he pulled the trigger, screaming defiantly "Come and fight a Gurkha!" Gurung continued to hold out for four hours with the rest of Taungdaw until reinforcements arrived. They counted 87 Japanese dead and 31 of them lay directly opposite the bloody and battered Lachhiman Gurung.

Awarded the Victoria Cross, Gurung remained with the regiment when it was transferred to India post-independence. On his retirement in 1947, he loaned his VC to the regiment to serve as an inspiration to new recruits.

ABOVE A group of Gurkhas, their officer, and a US Air Force liaison pose by a Buddhist shrine in newly liberated Mandalay, March 17, 1945. National Archives and Records Administration

ABOVE Two soldiers visit the military cemetery in Kohima to see the grave of former comrade Lance Corporal John Harman VC, who was awarded the Victoria Cross posthumously for gallantry at Kohima during 8 - 9 April 1944. Wikimedia

LANCE CORPORAL JOHN PENNINGTON HARMAN

July 20, 1914 – April 9, 1944

British Army | Victoria Cross

THE GENTEEL and well-bred Lance Corporal J. P. Harman and 4th Battalion Queen's Own Royal West Kent Regiment were rushed to Kohima for 15 hard-fighting days in which they helped to hold off the Japanese 15th Army – an estimated 13,500 men. On April 8, Harman was leading his platoon in action around 'Detail Hill' when they became pinned down by an enemy machine gun nest some 50 yards from their lines. Unable to counter its firepower and unwilling to put his men in further danger, Harman charged the strongpoint alone, tossed in a grenade and then returned carrying the enemy's gun as a trophy.

The next morning, seeing a group of Japanese soldiers digging in, he ordered covering fire from a Bren gun and set out alone to see off the working party before another machine gun took up residence. He shot four and bayonetted one, only to be fatally wounded in his side as he made his way back to the British lines. He was reported to have said as he died: "It was worth it. I got the lot."

The regiment – and its successor, the Princess of Wales's Royal Regiment – commemorate Kohima Day every April 9 by nominating one corporal as the 'Kohima Corporal' to take a place of honour at the regimental dinner.

LEFT A wreath is laid at the 2nd Battalion, The Royal Norfolk Regiment memorial in Kohima, 1944. Norfolk Museums Collection

COMPANY SERGEANT MAJOR JOHN ROBERT OSBORN

January 2, 1899 – December 19, 1941

Canadian Army | Victoria Cross

CANADA WAS wary of committing to another costly global conflict and cautiously dispatched barely 2,000 men for what looked like garrison duty in the Crown Colony of Hong Kong. Neither the Winnipeg Grenadiers nor the Royal Rifles of Canada were particularly battle-ready when they arrived on November 16, 1941, but Pearl Harbor – less than a month later – thrust them onto the front line for the Battle of Hong Kong (December 8-25, 1941).

Refusing to surrender, the Commonwealth troops pulled back to the island itself and fought bitterly. On December 19, 'A' Company, Winnipeg Grenadiers were dug in and surrounded on Mount Butler. The Japanese began to lob grenades into the Winnipeg positions and CSM John Osborn – a veteran of World War One – began to toss them back. When one fell too late for him to expel it, Osborn yelled a warning to his comrades and threw himself onto the grenade.

'A' Company surrendered, but Osborn had saved many lives at the cost of his own. Despite their inexperience, the Canadians fought valiantly, and many were still fighting when Major General Christopher Maltby ordered the surrender.

ABOVE Company Sergeant-Major John Osborn of The Winnipeg Grenadiers, pictured in Jamaica circa 1940. Canada Department of National Defence/Library and Archives Canada

The Japanese army enters Hong Kong, December 15, 1941. **National Archives and Records Administration**

CAPTAIN MATEEN AHMED ANSARI

December 16, 1915 – October 29, 1943

British Indian Army | George Cross

5TH BATTALION 7th Rajput Regiment fought so fiercely in the defence of Hong Kong that they counted the greatest losses of the six regular battalions on the island: 156 dead, 113 missing, and 193 wounded. Captured during the surrender, the handsome young Captain M. A. Ansari had the option of being imprisoned separately with his fellow officers but chose to remain with his men. Ansari additionally caught his goaler's interest when they discovered he was closely related to the ruler of one of India's hereditary Princely States. Many Indian POWs were offered their freedom in exchange for service in the collaborationist Indian National Army, and the value of such a prestigious convert – one who represented the traditional Indian aristocracy – was a tempting prize. Ansari was transferred to the notorious Stanley Road Prison, tortured, starved, and mutilated, but still, he refused to turn his back on Britain.

Tiring of his intransigence, Ansari was sentenced to death by beheading on October 29, 1943. Before they faced the blade, the condemned had five minutes to take the air and Ansari stiffened his fellows with a final address: "Everybody has to die sometime. Many die daily from disease, some suffer painful, lingering deaths. We will die strong and healthy for an ideal, not as traitors but nobly in our country's cause. We cannot now escape the enemy's sword, but no one should give in to tears or regrets, but instead face the enemy with a smile and die bravely."

After the war, the story of Ansari's courage was released alongside its inmates. He was awarded the George Cross for bravery outside of combat.

ABOVE A commandeered truck filled with men of the 5th Battalion, 7th Rajput Regiment move up through Hong Kong in 1941. Of the six regular infantry battalions in the colony, the 5/7th paid the highest price. **American Geographical Society Library, University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee Libraries**

LEFT C Company, Royal Rifles of Canada disembark from HMCS *Prince Robert* for the defence of Hong Kong, November 16, 1941. **Canada Department of National Defence/ Library and Archives Canada**

CAPTAIN JOHN NIEL RANDLE

December 22, 1917 – May 6, 1944

British Army | Victoria Cross

THE SECOND VC of Kohima, the handsome and well-connected Captain John Randle – known to friends and family as Jack – took command of a company of 2nd Battalion The Royal Norfolk Regiment on May 4, 1944, when its CO was severely wounded. Randle pressed home the attack and although wounded himself when shrapnel from a grenade hit his knee, continued to urge the men onwards until they had captured their objective. Then, the tireless captain limped out and brought in the wounded.

Refusing to be evacuated despite his injury, in the evening of May 5, Randle undertook reconnaissance of the next day's target under the bright moonlight and led the attack himself when morning broke. Randle led one platoon to the crest of a hill when he realised the one behind was pinned down by machine gun fire from an enemy bunker. With the Norfolks now unable to advance and his line of communication threatened, Randle gave his life to neutralise it. Charging the bunker alone with his bayonet fixed, he was mortally wounded, and witnesses recalled blood streaming from his face. With his strength fading, he threw a grenade through the firing slit then flung his body across it to prevent the grenade from being thrown back.

Tremendous courage against overwhelming odds became the hallmark of the Norfolks at Kohima. Like Randle, many refused to be evacuated for their injuries and fought on until they were physically unable. By the end of the Battle of Kohima, 4,064 Commonwealth casualties were counted along with perhaps as many as 7,000 Japanese as starvation and disease took their toll on the retreating 15th Army.

ABOVE Captain John Niel Randle kept distinguished company. Not only was he a Victoria Cross recipient but his best friend at university was Group Captain Leonard Cheshire VC and his brother in law was Flying Officer Leslie Manser VC.

ABOVE Jem. Abdul Hafiz, Victoria Cross recipient of the 9th Jat Regiment. Pictured in *The Fighting Fifth - History Of The Fifth Division*, an official history published by the War Department of the British Indian government.

JEMADAR RAO ABDUL HAFIZ KHAN

September 4, 1925 – April 6, 1944

British Indian Army | Victoria Cross

THE YOUNGEST ever Indian recipient of the Victoria Cross and the first Muslim recipient of the Second World War, the 18-year old Naib Subedar (junior commissioned officer) Abdul Hafiz led a platoon of the 9th Jat Regiment's machine gun battalion to turn back the Japanese invasion of India. Along with the Battle of Kohima (April 4 – June 22, 1944), the Battle of Imphal (March 8 – July 3, 1944) is regarded as the turning point of Britain's war in Asia.

Ordered to drive the Japanese from Runaway Hill on the Imphal-Kohima road – the vital lifeline to reinforcement – on the morning of April 6, 1944, Hafiz took two sections and charged the steep incline into the Japanese guns, telling his men that they were invincible and steeling their faith with war cries. On reaching the crest of the hill, Hafiz was wounded in the leg, but saw a Japanese machine gun pit to his flank and rushed towards it, grabbing the gun by the barrel, and forcing it upwards, while another Jat killed the gunner.

He then took a Bren gun from a wounded comrade, and despite his own injury, advanced on the next line of Japanese dugouts, firing it from the hip as he walked. The defenders poured fire into the young officer, hitting him again with machine gun fire, but his relentless advance was a tonic to his men and a terror to the Japanese, who abandoned their positions. Finally collapsing from blood loss but still cradling his Bren, Hafiz continued to fire at the retreating enemy shouting "Reorganise on the position and I will give covering fire."

Hafiz died shortly afterwards, but the hill was retaken and Imphal was held. Hafiz was posthumously raised to jemadar (Second Lieutenant) and the battle's only Victoria Cross was presented to his grieving widow, Jugri Begum.

SECOND LIEUTENANT ADNAN BIN SAIDI

1915 – February 14, 1942

Malay Regiment | Best Recruit in Malay Regiment; 1939-1945 Star; United Kingdom Defence Medal; War Medal 1939-1945

A GIFTED early recruit to the Malay Regiment who then became an NCO and officer, Adnan Saidi had been a teacher at an English-language school in his home province of Selangor before enlisting. As their training was intensified in the lead up to war, Adnan (traditional Malay naming conventions don't have family names, only patronyms) was promoted to second lieutenant with 'C' Company, 1st Battalion Malay Regiment.

The Malays were tasked with holding the Pasir Panjang Ridge – the Western anchor of the final defensive line around Singapore. On February 13, 1942, during the Battle of Pasir Panjang (February 12 – 15) the Japanese hit the line and after a day of bitter fighting the Malays retreated under cover of darkness to a new defensive position on Opium Hill (also known as Bukit Chandu).

In the early afternoon of February 14, a group of Japanese soldiers posing as Punjabi troops attempted to infiltrate the Malay positions wearing stolen uniforms and turbans, their faces masked with grime. Adnan and his fellow officer, Second Lieutenant Abbas bin Abdul Manan, saw the ruse for what it was as the approaching men were marching in a column of four rows Japanese style, and not three as was the norm in the British Army. Waiting until they were within close range, the Malays opened fire, killing, or wounding 22 attackers and putting the rest to flight. Two hours later, the Japanese mounted a final attack on the Malay positions. Adnan was fatally wounded but continued to urge his men to fight on, refusing to surrender until finally they were overcome in hand-to-hand fighting. Whilst his men were murdered, Adnan was shot, then bayonetted, and his body hung by its feet from a cherry tree.

Adnan's steadfastness in the face of certain death was characteristic of the Malay Regiment: in March 1942, the officer POWs were offered the option of either donning civilian clothes and walking free or keeping their rank and serving the Japanese as collaborators. Seven of them refused to betray their oaths and were executed.

Adnan is a national hero in both Singapore and Malaysia. When the events of Opium Hill became known in 1946, he was posthumously Mentioned in Despatches. More recently he was posthumously appointed a Member of the Order of Sultan Salahuddin Abdul Aziz Shah – a Malaysian knighthood.

ABOVE A bust of Lieutenant Adnan Saidi at Reflections at Bukit Chandu, a museum in Singapore commemorating the Malay Regiment at the Battles of Bukit Chandu and Pasir Panjang. Jnzl

ABOVE Japanese infantry advance through Kadar Province, Malaya on December 12, 1941. National Archives and Records Administration

ABOVE Japanese Type 95 Ha-Go tanks advance towards Shingora, Malaya. The Pacific Theatre was ill-suited to armour and the Imperial Japanese Army only used tanks in significant numbers in Malaya and the Philippines. National Archives and Records Administration

ITALY

JULY 1943 - MAY 1945

FOLLOWING THE Allied victory in North Africa, British Prime Minister Winston Churchill advocated an offensive in the Mediterranean, striking at Sicily and Italy, which he termed the 'soft underbelly' of the Axis. But when the gruelling, costly campaign in Italy continued to grind for seemingly endless months, General Mark Clark, commander of the Allied Fifth Army, said his experience fighting up the Italian boot was more like battling a 'tough old gut'.

Indeed, the campaign in the Mediterranean, particularly the invasions of Sicily and Italy, extended from mid-1943 until the end of World War Two. When the peace documents were signed in early May 1945 at a schoolhouse in Reims, France, fighting was just subsiding in northern Italy.

From staging areas in North Africa, the British Eighth Army, under General Bernard Law Montgomery, and the US Seventh Army, commanded by General George S. Patton, Jr., undertook *Operation Husky*, the invasion of Sicily, on July 9, 1943. The British landed at Syracuse and fought their way north toward the port of Messina, which lay just a few miles from the toe of the Italian boot. The Americans came ashore at Gela, charged with protecting the British flank.

During five weeks of intense fighting, Patton received permission to extend northwest, capturing the city of Palermo and then advancing along the northern coast of the island to capture Messina. A heated rivalry developed between Patton and Montgomery, a rivalry that flared again in Western Europe a year later. As Sicily was secured, thousands of German soldiers managed to evacuate across the narrow Strait of Messina to the Italian mainland to fight another day. And fight they did, even as Benito Mussolini's regime was deposed, and Italy switched to the Allied side.

In September, the Allies renewed their Mediterranean offensive, the Fifth Army under Clark landing at Salerno and the Eighth, under Montgomery, coming ashore at Taranto and Calabria. The Salerno landings were hotly contested. Clark threw clerks, truck drivers, and musicians into the line to preserve the beachhead.

Later, the Allied armies began their grim slog through the mountains, valleys, swift rivers, and climate extremes of Italy, ideal for defensive fighting. German Field Marshal Albert Kesselring, a Luftwaffe officer, conducted a brilliant defensive campaign. Slowing the Allies to a crawl at several lines stretching from the Adriatic in the east to the Tyrrhenian in the west, Kesselring inflicted thousands of casualties on the Allies.

In the early months of 1944, bitter fighting took a heavy toll. At Monte Cassino, Allied soldiers were denied the town on the road to Rome for months. The controversial bombing of the abbey crowning the mountain led to horrific combat as German paratroopers defended the rubble.

Finally in May, Monte Cassino, anchor of the infamous Gustav Line, was taken as Polish troops captured the demolished abbey. Meanwhile, the American 36th Division attempted a bloody crossing of the swollen Rapido River. Clark's decision to cross remains highly criticised.

In January 1944, Allied troops attempted an amphibious landing at Anzio, 35 miles from Rome. *Operation Shingle*, intended to outflank the Gustav Line, force a German retreat, and open the road to Rome, became a death-trap. German reinforcements surrounded the Allies, pounding them with artillery fire.

In the spring, General Harold Alexander, commander of Allied armies in Italy, unleashed *Operation Diadem* with the decisive assault at Monte Cassino across the rugged mountains to link up with troops breaking out of the Anzio beachhead. Then, the Allies rolled through the Liri Valley and liberated Rome.

With the immediate success of *Diadem*, Clark was poised to drive east and cut off thousands of German troops to the south. Instead, he ordered his columns northwest and took Rome on June 4, 1944. The capture of an Axis capital made headlines, but only briefly as the Normandy invasion relegated the Italian campaign to a sideshow within hours. Clark's decision to seek personal glory is questioned to this day.

As Allied spearheads drove north, they faced stubborn resistance, and the fighting in Italy did not end until early May 1945.

The Italian campaign was one of hard fighting, miscalculation, lost opportunity, and battlefield triumph as the heroism of Allied soldiers made the difference between victory and defeat.

ABOVE British troops of the 51st Highland Division come ashore on the island of Sicily during the opening hours of *Operation Husky*.
Public Domain

ABOVE Richard Wakeford (left) shakes the hand of King George VI after receiving the Victoria Cross for heroism during the fighting around Monte Cassino. Public Domain

MAJOR RICHARD WAKEFORD

July 23, 1921 – August 27, 1972

British Army | Victoria Cross

THE SON of a physician, Richard Wakeford intended to follow into the practice of medicine. He was studying at Oxford and well on the way to becoming a surgeon when World War Two interrupted his progress in 1939.

Wakeford received a commission as a lieutenant in the 2/4th Battalion, the Hampshire Regiment on February 22, 1941, and during the course of the war he was wounded three times. He was Mentioned in Despatches in 1943, and the following spring took part in the bloody series of battles for the town of Monte Cassino. It was there that his courage under fire led to the award of the Victoria Cross.

Near the town of Cassino on May 13, 1944, Wakeford was in command of the leading company on the right flank of an attack against a pair of heavily defended hills. With only his orderly by his side and armed with his revolver, the officer killed several German troopers of the 1st Parachute Division and captured 20 prisoners as the advance went forward.

As his company approached its objective, a German officer and five soldiers occupied a house and temporarily stalled the drive. Wakeford attempted twice to drive the defenders out but was forced back by enemy hand grenades. On the third attempt, he reached a window of the house and lobbed a grenade inside. The Germans who were not killed then chose to surrender.

ABOVE British soldiers establish radio communications during the fighting at the Italian town of Cassino in the 1943 Allied drive toward Rome. Public Domain

The following day, a British tank stalled at the start line of another advance, and the accompanying infantry were subjected to withering enemy fire. As casualties mounted, Wakeford maintained control of his company and, although he had sustained wounds to his face and arms, advanced halfway up a hillside amid murderous German machine gun fire. He organised a group of soldiers to deal with the immediate threat, but mortar shells began falling close by, wounding Wakeford in both legs. Nevertheless, he continued to direct his troops during a seven-hour engagement, waiting for litter bearers to reach him, but never wavering in the discharge of his duties.

Wakeford's Victoria Cross was gazetted on July 13, 1944, and he received the medal from King George VI in Italy. After the war, the effects of wounds to his hands disqualified his return to surgery, and he undertook a career in law.

COMPANY SERGEANT MAJOR PETER HAROLD WRIGHT

August 10, 1916 – April 5, 1990

British Army | Victoria Cross

ABOVE Company Sergeant Major Peter Harold Wright received the Victoria Cross for action in hand-to-hand combat near Salerno. Public Domain

COMPANY SERGEANT Major Peter Harold Wright was a hero, true enough, and initially the Distinguished Conduct Medal (DCM) seemed sufficient to recognise his bravery in the opening days of the Italian campaign. That is until King George VI made his preference for the Victoria Cross known. The DCM was cancelled, and the Victoria Cross swiftly substituted.

Wright had enlisted in the British Army in 1936, at the age of 20, and joined the Coldstream Guards, one of its most storied regiments. Serving with the 3rd Battalion, he had come ashore on the Italian mainland September 9, 1943, at Salerno during *Operation Avalanche*.

Two weeks later, the Allied Fifth Army was locked in combat with German forces that were contesting the expansion of the beachhead. Wright's company was attacking enemy positions on a steep hill called the Pagliarolli feature in the vicinity of Salerno on September 25, and heavy enemy fire had taken a severe toll as the company neared the crest of the high ground.

As the momentum of the attack stalled, Wright moved forward to assess the situation and found that every officer of the company had been either killed or wounded. He seized the initiative, crawling forward alone to determine the locations of the German machine guns that had pinned the company down. Taking command, he ordered a section of infantrymen to lay covering fire from a concealed position and then in turn attacked each of three enemy strongpoints, first with hand grenades and then finishing the job each time with the bayonet.

After silencing the three German machine gun nests, Wright led the company to the top of the hill. However, concentrated enemy fire made the position too hazardous. He then conducted an orderly withdrawal partially down the slope and led the command back to its objective by another route. Braving continuous enemy fire, Wright placed his company in strong defensive positions. A German counterattack was successfully repulsed, but enemy artillery and machine guns continued to fire on the crest of the hill. Utterly disregarding the danger, Wright retrieved badly needed ammunition and distributed it among the men.

The company sergeant major's Victoria Cross citation appeared in the September 7, 1944, edition of *The London Gazette*.

ABOVE British soldiers move warily past a burning German tank near Salerno in September 1943. Public Domain

CAPTAIN DANIEL INOUYE

September 7, 1924 –
December 17, 2012

US Army | Medal of Honor; Bronze Star; Purple Heart; Presidential Medal of Freedom

ABOVE First Lieutenant Daniel Inouye of the 442 Regimental Combat Team posed for this photo following his heroic action on the battlefield in Italy. **Public Domain**

DANIEL INOUYE was born in Honolulu, Hawaii, the son of Japanese immigrants. He was a US citizen; however, with the outbreak of World War Two, Japanese-Americans were subjected to involuntary internment, many losing their property and suffering extensively, due to suspicions regarding their loyalty to the United States following the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor, December 7, 1941.

Inouye and other Japanese-Americans born in the US were referred to as Nisei, and when the opportunity to demonstrate their patriotism emerged, large numbers volunteered for service. With the famed Nisei 442nd Regimental Combat Team, Inouye served in Italy as a platoon sergeant. The 442nd was then transferred to France, where it participated in the rescue of the 'Lost Battalion' of the 141st Infantry Regiment, which had been cut off by the Germans in the Vosges Mountains.

On April 21, 1945, Lieutenant Inouye was engaged in an attack on German positions along a ridgeline at San Terenzo, Italy, and was wounded five times. Three machine guns were firing at his men from a distance of only 40 yards. As he moved forward, he was shot in the stomach. Undeterred, he destroyed one of the machine guns with his Thompson submachine gun and hand grenades. After taking out a second machine gun, he fell to the ground, weakened by loss of blood. He regained consciousness and moved against the third enemy position.

Just as Inouye raised his right arm to throw another grenade, a German rifle grenade shattered his arm at the elbow. Still, he remained in control of the platoon and refused evacuation until the position was secured. Twenty-five German soldiers were killed and eight captured in the fighting.

Surgeons amputated Inouye's shredded arm, and he remained in the army until 1947. Later, he served the state of Hawaii for years in the US House of Representatives and the US Senate. His heroism was initially recognized with the Distinguished Service Cross, but the award was upgraded to the Medal of Honor, presented by President Bill Clinton on June 21, 2000.

ABOVE Senator Daniel Inouye receives the Medal of Honor from President Bill Clinton decades after his service during World War Two. **Public Domain**

ABOVE King George VI presents the Victoria Cross to Kamal Ram of the 8th Punjab Regiment on July 26, 1944. **Public Domain**

HONORARY LIEUTENANT KAMAL RAM

December 17, 1924 – July 1, 1982

British Indian Army | Victoria Cross

KAMAL RAM, a soldier of the 3rd Battalion, 8th Punjab Regiment, British Indian Army, was only 19 years old when he was involved in desperate combat in Italy on May 12, 1944, participating in attacks against the formidable German defences of the Gustav Line.

Under cover of darkness, the battalion crossed the River Gari, but the general advance was soon halted by four German machine gun emplacements firing directly from the front and from both flanks. The positions threatened the small bridgehead across the Gari, and when the company commander asked for a volunteer to move forward and attempt to silence the machine gun firing on the right flank, Ram stepped forward.

Crawling through barbed wire entanglements to reach the rear of the German position, Ram rushed ahead, shooting the first German machine gunner he encountered. When a second tried to take Ram's weapon, Ram dispatched the enemy soldier with his bayonet. Seconds later, a German officer appeared in the trench with his pistol ready to fire. Ram was quicker at the trigger, and the officer fell dead.

Ram continued his singlehanded assault, taking on the second machine gun. He shot a German soldier and then threw a hand grenade that induced the others in the position to surrender. When he spotted another soldier moving toward the third machine gun position, Ram joined him, covering the other man as he made a reconnaissance before finishing off the third emplacement himself.

After Ram's heroic acts, the bridgehead across the Gari was consolidated, and engineers were able to complete the construction of two bridges over the river without enduring harassing enemy fire. Later, as a platoon advanced to expand the beachhead perimeter, it was held up by German fire from a nearby house. Ram again leaped to action, shooting an enemy soldier in a slit trench, and then capturing two more.

Ram's Victoria Cross citation appeared in the July 27, 1944, edition of *The London Gazette*, and King George VI travelled to Italy to present the soldier with Britain's highest award for bravery in combat.

FIRST LIEUTENANT DAVID C. WAYBUR

September 29, 1919 – March 28, 1945

US Army | Medal of Honor; Silver Star; Purple Heart

FIRST LIEUTENANT David C. Waybur was a war hero, a recipient of the Medal of Honor for courage under fire at the town of Agrigento, Sicily, on July 17, 1943. The medal was presented during a ceremony in North Africa later that year by General Mark Clark, then commanding the Allied Fifth Army during the Italian campaign.

Because of his celebrity status, Waybur was detailed to return to the United States and participate in war bond drives, raising money to finance the American war effort. The bond tour included stops in several cities and speeches to crowds. But in his mind, Waybur was never far away from his fellow soldiers, still fighting and dying in Europe. He asked to return to the front, and his request was granted. However, just days later he was killed in action in Germany.

ABOVE Lieutenant David C Waybur smiles shortly after receiving the Medal of Honor. The insignia of the US 3rd Infantry Division is emblazoned on his helmet. Public Domain

Back in Sicily, Waybur had volunteered to lead a patrol of the 3rd Reconnaissance Troop, 3rd Infantry Division under cover of darkness, their mission to locate a missing Ranger unit. The road ahead was known to be heavily mined, and the enemy's strength was relatively unknown although machine gun emplacements and roadblocks were certainties.

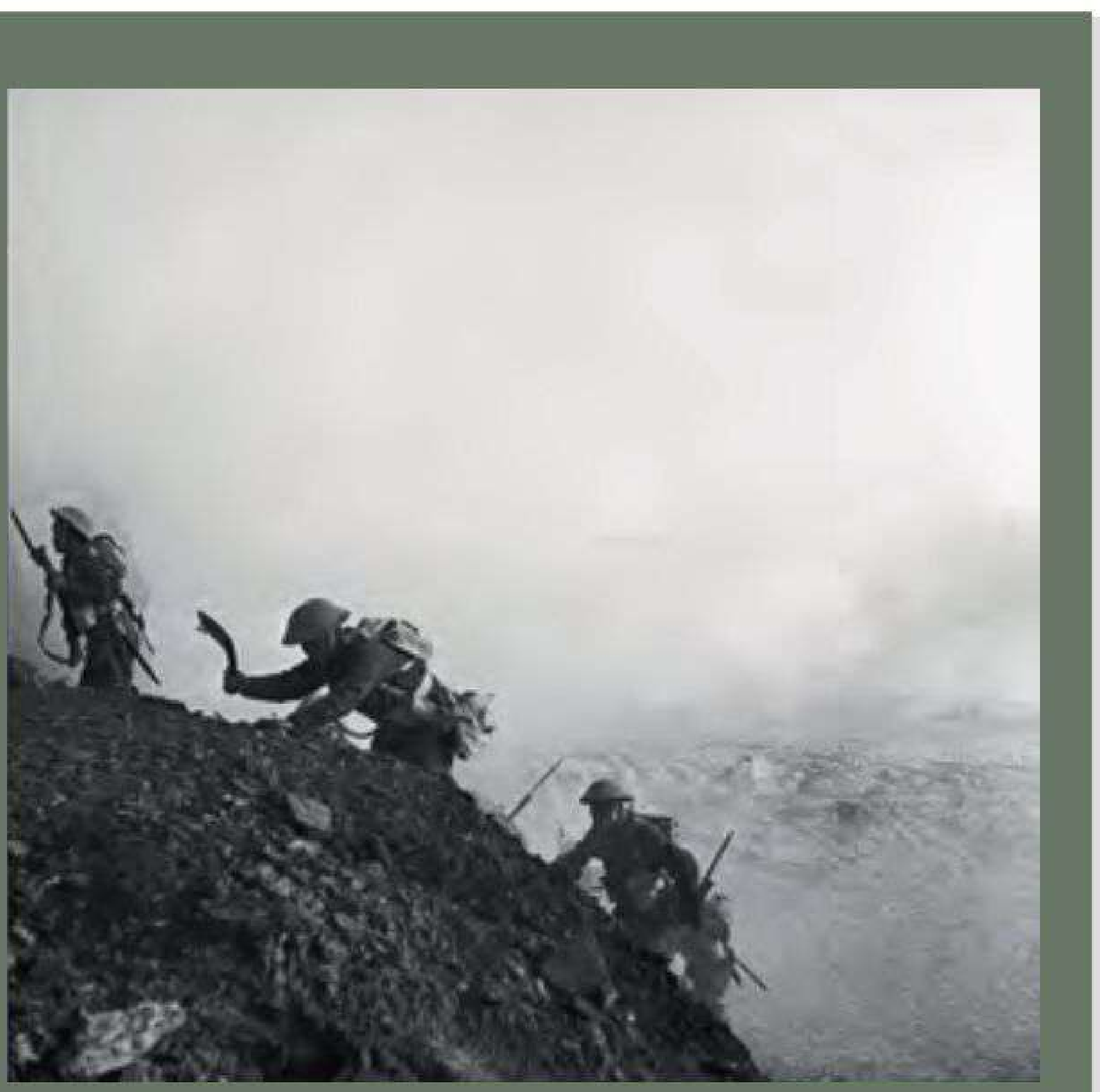
Riding in three Jeeps, the patrol approached a bridge that had been destroyed by the enemy, and suddenly was cut off and attacked by four Italian tanks. The Americans were outgunned, but Waybur immediately ordered the Jeeps to disperse and his men to open fire with mounted .30-calibre and .50-calibre machine guns. Ammunition was quickly exhausted, and Waybur and three other men were seriously wounded.

Nevertheless, the lieutenant ignored his injury and stood silhouetted in the moonlight, firing his Thompson sub-machine gun at the enemy. He engaged the leading Italian tank at a distance of 30 yards and killed the crew, causing the driverless vehicle to roll onto the bridge and then fall into the stream below. Sending one soldier toward the rear for assistance, Waybur and the others continued to resist until relieved the following morning.

RIFLEMAN THAMAN GURUNG

October 2, 1924 – November 10, 1944

British Indian Army | Victoria Cross



ABOVE Their weapons at the ready, including the crooked native knife called the kukri, Gurkha troops climb a hillside to engage the Axis enemy. Public Domain

THE NEPALESE Gurkha soldier has a highly respected place in the annals of military history. Such fighting men have earned in blood and tenacity a reputation as some of the world's finest troops. Soldiers like rifleman Thaman Gurung, who gave his life in combat against the Germans in Italy during World War Two and received a posthumous Victoria Cross, are remembered for upholding the finest traditions of the British and Commonwealth armies.

Gurung served with the 1st Battalion, 5th Royal Gurkha Rifles. On November 10, 1944, he was one of two men sent on a dangerous patrol by their company commander to reconnoitre the area surrounding Monte San Bartolo, slated for follow-on attack. The two scouts advanced to a hill occupied by German troops but as Gurung climbed toward the top, the other scout alerted him. Several enemy soldiers occupying a slit trench near the crest were about to open fire on the leading section of advancing Gurkhas. Gurung rushed the enemy position, and its startled occupants surrendered without firing a shot.

As he reached the hilltop, Gurung spotted enemy soldiers on the reverse slope preparing to throw hand grenades. Silhouetted against the sky and without cover, he ran a gauntlet of machine gun fire and attacked the Germans with his Thompson sub-machine gun. The leading Gurkha section soon reached the high ground.

Again, Gurung seized the initiative, exposing himself to chattering enemy machine guns. He fired on several slit trenches and threw hand grenades into the enemy positions, allowing vulnerable infantry sections to his rear to pull back. While the leading infantry section was still on the hilltop, withering German fire made the position untenable. Gurung shouted to withdraw, grabbed a Bren gun and ammunition, and stood on the high ground. As the leading section withdrew, he exhausted his supply of ammunition and was killed by enemy fire.

Due to the heroism of Thaman Gurung, the platoon was able to pull back without sustaining heavier casualties, and the reconnaissance of the surrounding terrain facilitated the capture of the high ground three days later.

ABOVE Gurkha soldiers take aim at the distant enemy from positions on high ground at Monte Castiglione, Italy. Public Domain

GENERAL WLADYSLAW ANDERS

August 11, 1892 – May 12, 1970

Polish Army | Order of the White Eagle; Virtuti Militari; French Legion of Honor; Croix de Guerre; British Honorary Companion of the Order of the Bath; US Legion of Merit

ABOVE General Wladyslaw Anders led Polish forces against the Nazis during World War Two and was an avowed anti-communist. **Public Domain**

GENERAL WLADYSLAW Anders gained lasting fame as the commander of Polish forces fighting with the Western Allies during World War Two. The Poles took an active role in the Italian campaign and captured the abbey of Monte Cassino in 1943 following numerous Allied attempts to dislodge heavily entrenched German paratroopers. After World War Two, Anders was one of many expatriate Poles who opposed the pro-Soviet communist regime in Poland and refused to return to their homeland. He remained in Britain, was stripped of his Polish citizenship by the communist government in 1946 and became a prominent leader among Polish exiles living in the West.

Anders was born in the village of Krosniewice-Blonie, about 60 miles west of Warsaw, which was then part of the Russian Empire. He served in the Russian Army during World War One and received several medals from the Czarist government. Following the reconstitution of the Polish nation after the Great War, he joined the Polish Army and participated in the war with Russia in 1919-1920.

With the outbreak of World War Two, Anders led Polish forces against the invading Nazis in the west and the Soviet Red Army in the east. He was captured by the Soviets and imprisoned until an agreement was reached in 1941 between the Soviet Union and the Polish government in exile. After his release, he was permitted to form a Polish armed force in the Soviet Union. However, while his ultimate goal was to liberate Poland, such an outcome was virtually impossible with his fighting contingent of 80,000 troops under the control of the Soviet government.

Diplomatic pressure from the British government and Polish diplomats led Soviet Premier Josef Stalin to allow Anders' command to transfer to Palestine, which was governed under British mandate. Subsequently, the famed Polish Armed Forces in the West came under British command, and the Polish II Corps fought with distinction during the Italian campaign.

ABOVE Polish soldiers move cautiously through the ruins of the abbey of Monte Cassino during *Operation Diadem.* General Wladyslaw Anders led the Poles throughout World War Two. **Public Domain**

ABOVE Soldiers of the 10th Mountain Division hitch a ride aboard an M4 Sherman medium tank as they advance through northern Italy. **Public Domain**

CAPTAIN ROBERT DOLE

July 22, 1923 – December 5, 2021

US Army | Bronze Star; Purple Heart

"I COULD see my platoon's radioman go down…After pulling his lifeless form into the foxhole, I scrambled back out again. As I did, I felt a sharp sting in my upper right back."

Years after his combat experience in the mountains of northern Italy, Robert Dole clearly recalled April 14, 1945, the day he nearly lost his life. Dole had joined the Army Reserve in 1942 and became a lieutenant with the 10th Mountain Division, elite soldiers trained to fight in rugged terrain amid winter weather conditions and to use skis to increase their mobility.

While fighting for high ground labelled on maps as 'Hill 913' near Castel d'Aiano in the Apennine Mountains, Dole led a platoon toward enemy positions. He was seriously wounded by a German shell that shattered his collarbone and right shoulder, damaged his spine and both arms, and later led to the loss of a kidney. He recalled: "I lay face down in the dirt. I could not see or move my arms. I thought they were missing."

ABOVE Senator Robert Dole of Kansas, seriously wounded in Italy during World War Two, addresses a gathering decades after the war. **Public Domain**

Ninety-eight American soldiers died at Hill 913 that day.

After lying on the ground for six hours, Dole was evacuated to a field hospital, where a doctor assessed his prognosis as grim. Nevertheless, he was treated and removed to a hospital in Italy, spending weeks in a body cast. He subsequently underwent nine operations and three years of rehabilitation. He lost the use of his right arm for the rest of his life, and his left arm was continually numb. Still, he managed to learn to write with his left hand and always carried a pen in his useless right hand.

Robert Dole went on to a post-war political career, serving the state of Kansas in the United States Senate for 27 years. He was the nominee of the Republican Party for President of the United States in 1996. Dole died in 2021 at the age of 98.

CAPTAIN JOHN BRUNT

December 6, 1922 – December 10, 1944

British Army | Victoria Cross; Military Cross

ABOVE Captain John Brunt displayed exceptional courage on the battlefield in Italy. He was killed by a German mortar shell. Public Domain

FOUR DAYS after his 22nd birthday, Captain John Brunt was killed. A German mortar shell exploded at his feet as he stood in a doorway in the town of Faenza, Italy. Just a day earlier he had displayed exceptional personal courage in the face of the enemy.

Indeed, Brunt's exploits were deserving, and the citation for his posthumous Victoria Cross appeared in the February 6, 1945, edition of *The London Gazette*. King George VI presented the medal to Brunt's mother and father at Buckingham Palace on December 18, a year after his death.

Captain Brunt had already received the Military Cross for actions on December 15, 1943, while fighting the Germans at the River Peccia and leading an infantry section that subdued enemy resistance in three houses. A day later, he left a hospital to lead a patrol and was nearly killed by shrapnel that impacted his helmet and resulted in a concussion.

An officer of the Sherwood Foresters posted to the 6th Battalion, Lincolnshire Regiment, Brunt was in action again on December 9, 1944. That morning, the Germans launched a heavy attack against a sector of the line that Brunt's platoon occupied. Outnumbered three-to-one, Brunt relocated his men, covering their movement, personally killing 14 Germans with a Bren gun, and firing an anti-tank weapon and two-inch mortar after his Bren ammunition was exhausted. He slipped to the new position as the enemy paused and then returned to pull wounded men to safety.

Within hours, a second German attack commenced. Brunt fired his Bren gun, encouraged his men to hold the line, and jumped atop an M4 Sherman medium tank, directing its fire. When he spotted anti-tank teams skirting around the Sherman, he dismounted and hunted them down, killing several enemy soldiers and forcing the rest to retire. The German attack receded in failure.

Brunt's father met Field Marshal Harold Alexander, commander of Allied forces in Italy, at the Victoria Cross ceremony, and remarked, "I expect you know many men who should have been awarded this medal." Alexander responded, "No, because there is always only one who will do the unexpected and that day it was your son."

LEFT A British Army scout car makes its way through the streets of a liberated Italian city. The courage of soldiers like Captain John Brunt made scenes such as this possible. Public Domain

ABOVE American soldiers advance along a mountain road in Italy. Sergeant Sylvester Antolek was familiar with the rugged terrain of the country. Public Domain

RIGHT Sergeant Sylvester Antolek gave his life, charging two German machine gun emplacements on May 24, 1944. Public Domain

SERGEANT SYLVESTER ANTOLEK

September 10, 1916 – May 24, 1944

US Army | Medal of Honor; Purple Heart

SERGEANT SYLVESTER Antolek was a soldier of Company B, 15th Infantry Regiment, 3rd Infantry Division. The famous war hero and actor Audie Murphy was also a member of the regiment, and although Murphy's fame has eclipsed that of Antolek, there is no doubt that Antolek is worthy of remembrance.

One of those who witnessed and remembered Antolek's heroism on May 24, 1944, while fighting near Cisterna di Littoria, Italy, was Audie Murphy himself. Two German strongpoints poured fire into the advancing Americans that day, and while they were firing on troops forward of Antolek's platoon, the sergeant realised that his own soldiers would soon be caught in a deadly concentration of enemy bullets.

In his autobiography To Hell And Back, Murphy recalled, "A sergeant in the first platoon senses the predicament. If his men are isolated, they will be destroyed. He makes his decision quickly. Motioning his men to follow, he rises and with a sub-machine gun charges head-on toward one of the enemy positions two hundred yards away. On the flat, coverless terrain, his body is a perfect target. A blast of automatic fire knocks him down. He springs to his feet with a bleeding shoulder and continues his charge. The guns rattle. Again, he goes down."

Murphy and other witnesses saw Sergeant Antolek rise up a third time and dash straight toward the nearest enemy strongpoint. He reached within 15 yards of the position, shot two German soldiers, and forced another 10 to surrender. Refusing medical attention, he started toward the second strongpoint, 100 yards distant.

Antolek covered more than 60 yards before a burst of machine gun fire cut him down. Those who followed, however, were inspired by his example and overwhelmed the second enemy position. Antolek's posthumous Medal of Honor was recognised with Army General Order No. 89, dated October 19, 1945.

SOUTHWEST PACIFIC

1941 - 1945

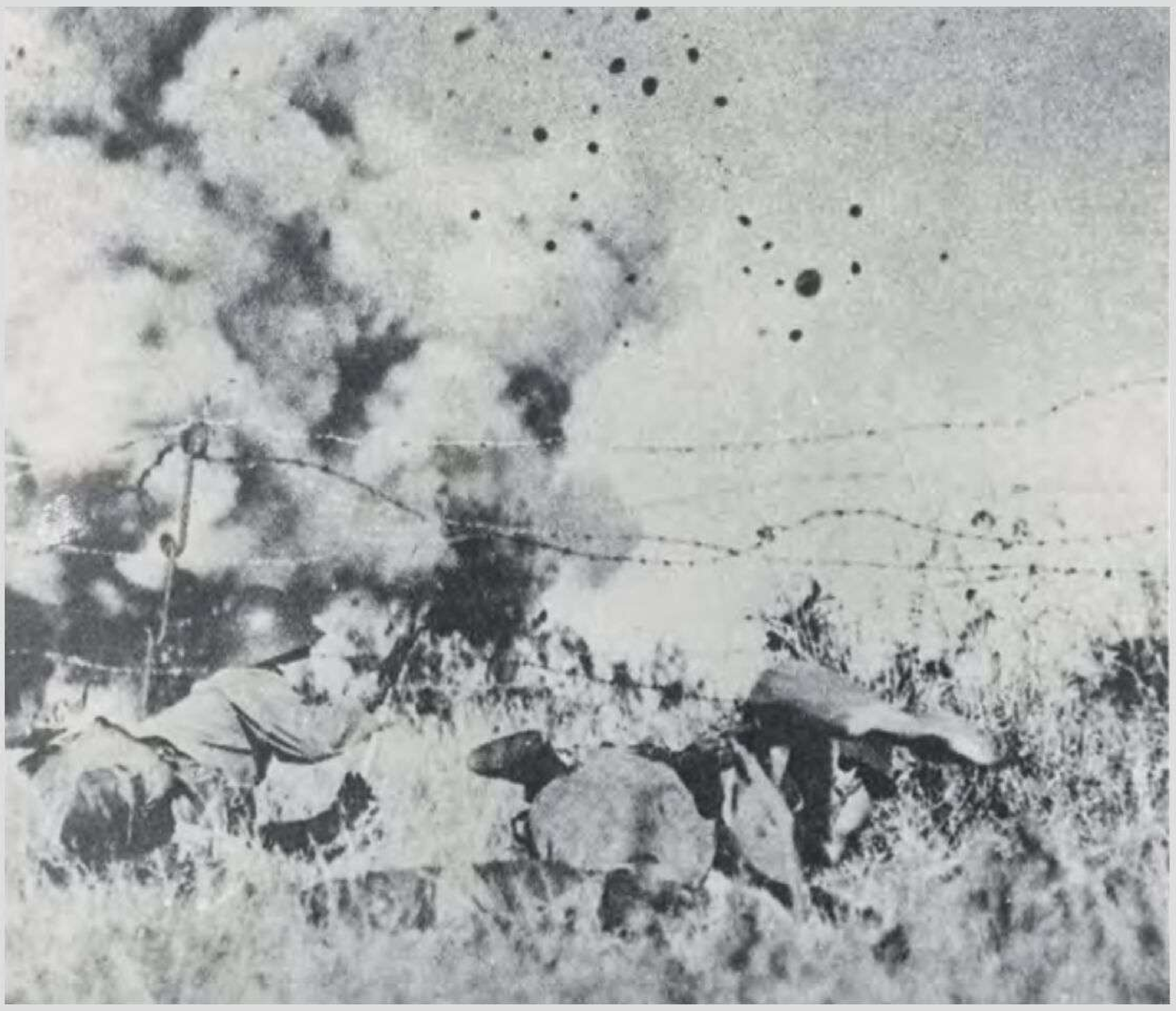
SIMULTANEOUS WITH the attack on Pearl Harbor, the Imperial Japanese Navy brought the axe down on the self-governing Commonwealth of the Philippines. With dwindling supplies and no hope of relief, the defenders fought on as best they could until they had no choice but to surrender.

In the wake of the Battle of Bataan (January 7 – April 9, 1942), 76,000 US and Philippine troops became prisoners of war. They were marched 65 miles in the blistering heat to the site of their incarceration, many were murdered when they dropped through dehydration or heat stroke. Between 7,000 and 10,000 POWs were killed on the Bataan Death March. The last pocket of organised resistance fell a month later at the Battle of Corregidor (May 5-6, 1942).

The view from the Antipodes was black. The collapse of the Dutch East Indies (now Indonesia) on March 9, 1942, brought the Japanese sphere of influence onto the island of New Guinea. Control of Port Moresby on the island's southwest coast would bring Japanese bombers in range of mainland Australia and deny the Allies their only forward base in a theatre they were quickly being driven out of.

At the order of President Roosevelt, General Douglas MacArthur escaped the Philippines on March 11, 1942, and formed the Southwest Pacific Area Command from his new base in Australia. Meanwhile, the Japanese landed on the north coast of New Guinea and began to march across the Owen Stanley Range towards Port Moresby. The Kokoda Track campaign (July 21 – November 16, 1942) was initially fought by the militiamen of the 39th Battalion and locally raised auxiliaries, who could do little more than conduct a frantic fighting retreat through the dense jungle until Australian and US regulars began to arrive.

Once Port Moresby was secured and the invader was driven back to his beachheads, the US aims were deceptively simple: retake the Philippines and push on to Japan. This meant a methodical 'island hopping' campaign to isolate Japanese naval bases and garrisons, cutting their overstretched lines of supply, all while bringing them steadily closer to their targets. The Solomon Islands and the Gilbert Islands were taken in 1943, and the Mariana and Marshall Islands fell by summer 1944, bringing Japan itself within range of the new long-range Boeing B-29 Superfortress.



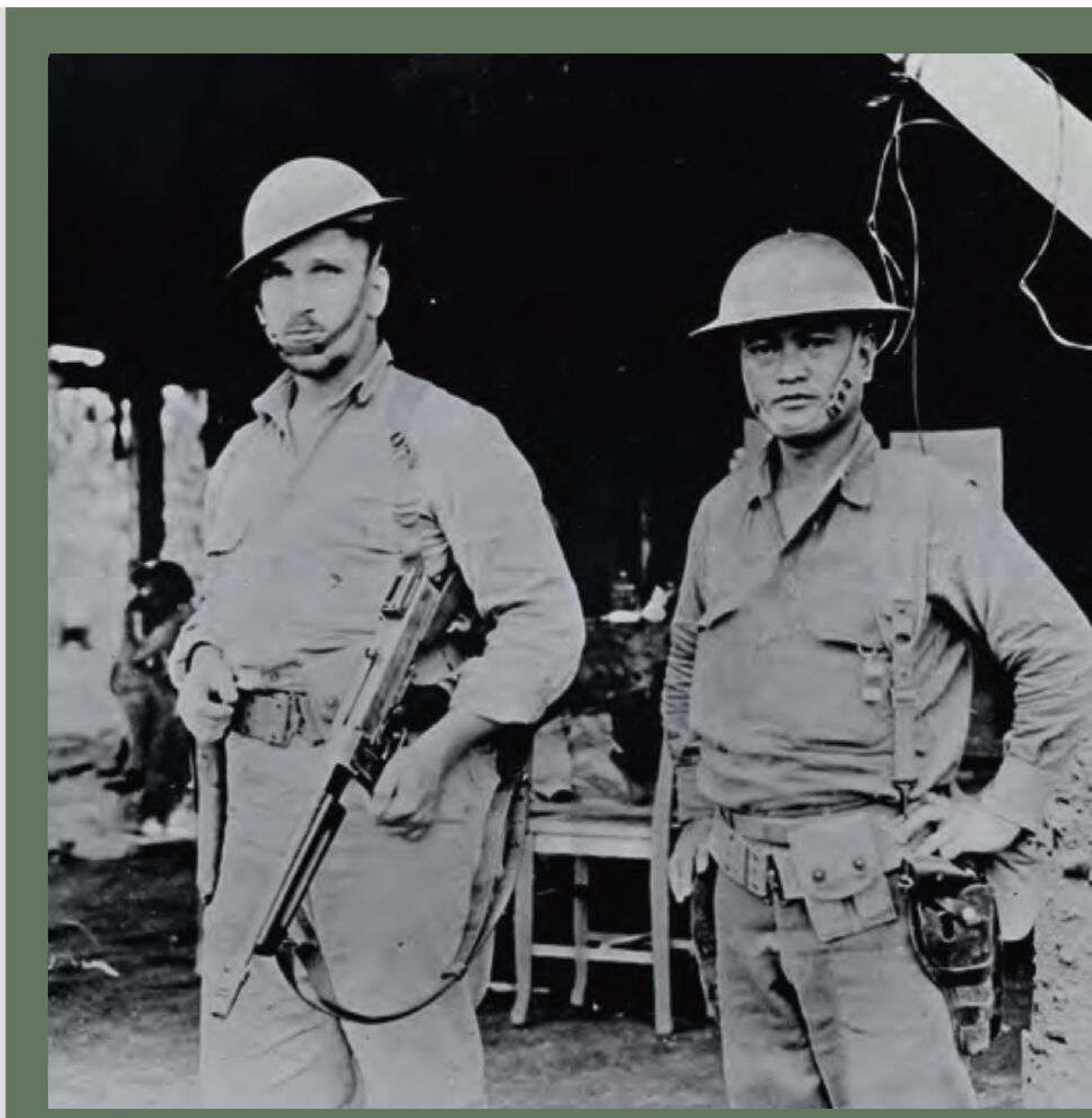
ABOVE Under the cover of artillery, Japanese infantry cut through barbed wire on Bataan, 1942. Naval History and Heritage Command

MacArthur and the US Sixth Army finally waded ashore on the Philippines on October 20, 1944, to end three years of brutal occupation. By March 3, 1945, the flag of the Commonwealth of the Philippines fluttered pyrrhicly over the ruins of Manila, with the Japanese still holding the north and south of the islands. Whilst operations continued in the Philippines, New Guinea, and elsewhere, the cataclysmic Battle of Okinawa (April 1 – June 22, 1945) showed the US Marine Corps the high cost of fighting on Japan's periphery.

Half of the island's pre-war population was killed, many taking their own lives in mass suicides, while huge numbers of civilians (including boys as young as 14) were drafted into uniform and thrown against American tanks with grenades. The Allies braced for further horrors as they moved deeper into the Japanese island chain before the Atomic bombs dropped on Hiroshima and Nagasaki on August 6 and 9, 1945, brought the campaign to a close.

ABOVE A stretcher party of Papuan Infantry Battalion moves through the New Guinea bush. State Library New South Wales

LEFT With a tank leading the way, US Marines creep towards heavily entrenched Japanese positions through the blasted landscape of Peleliu, 1944. USMC Archives



ABOVE Captain Arthur W. Wermuth and his aide, 57th Infantry Regiment (PS). National Archives and Records Administration

CAPTAIN ARTHUR WILLIAM WERMUTH, JR.

December 29, 1907 – January 18, 1988

US Army | Distinguished Service Cross; Silver Star

ONE OF a handful of American officers with the 57th Infantry Regiment (PS), Cap. 'Art' Wermuth captivated the press with his larger than life escapades.

On one occasion, Wermuth volunteered to set an enemy-held village ablaze and crawled behind the lines dragging two five-gallon cans of petrol. Emptying them out behind the shacks where the Japanese were billeted, he tossed a lit match and made himself scarce. Daredevil raids like this, as well as his skill with a Thomson sub-machine gun, led to him being dubbed the 'One-Man Army of Bataan'.

After being shot in the leg by a Japanese sniper, Wermuth gained permission to form an anti-sniper unit to hunt down enemy infiltrators who hid in the dense mango trees for days on end, their faces and hands camouflaged, and their smokeless rifles making them almost impossible to detect as they took opportunistic shots at officers and rear echelon troops. During the Battle of Bataan, the 'Anti-Sniper Society' accounted for over 300 Japanese sharpshooters at a cost of only 45 casualties.

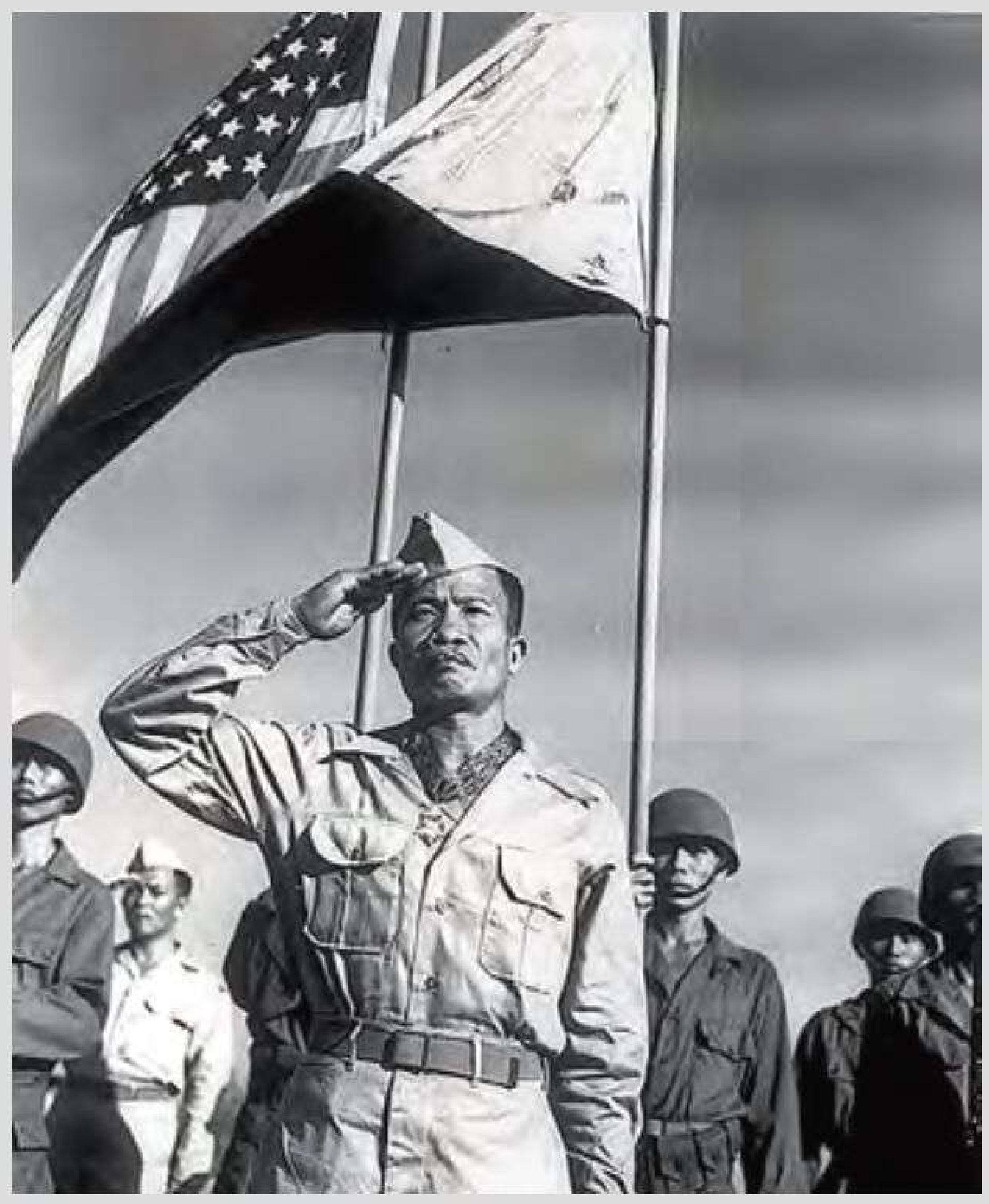
Credited with over 116 kills personally, Wermuth was awarded the Distinguished Service Cross for his actions in the battle.

He was hospitalised when the Philippines fell and saw out the rest of the war a POW, narrowly escaping death when *Oryoku Maru* – its hold laden with prisoners – was bombed by US pilots who mistook it for a troopship.

CAPTAIN JOSE CABALFIN CALUGAS, SR.

December 29, 1907 – January 18, 1988

US Army | Medal of Honor



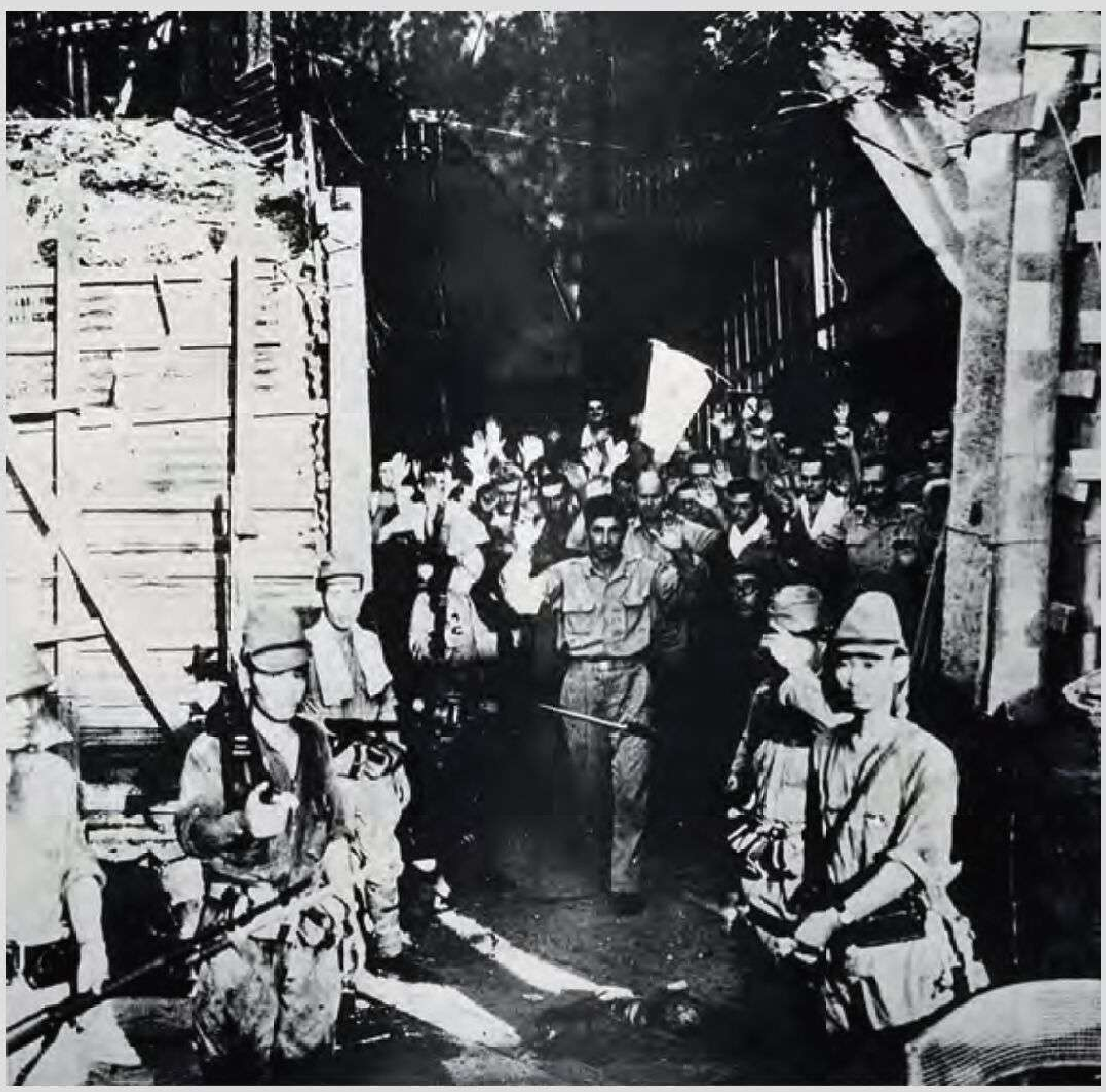
ABOVE Sergeant Jose Calugas at his Medal of Honor ceremony following the liberation of the Philippines, April 30, 1945. Library of Congress

THE FIRST three Medals of Honor awarded in World War Two were to members of the veteran Philippine Scouts and Captain Jose Calugas, then a mess sergeant in the 88th Field Artillery (PS), was the first amongst equals.

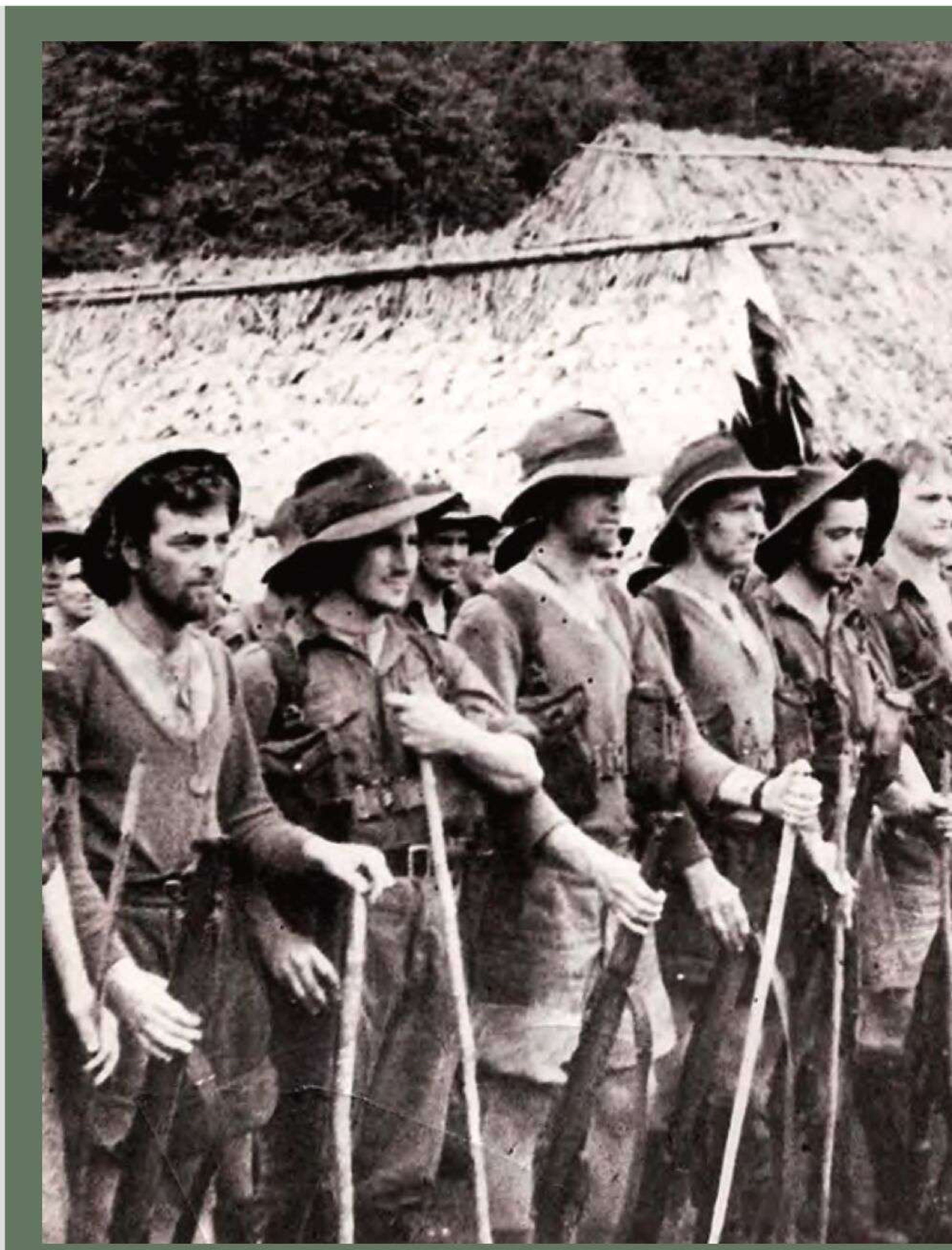
On January 16, 1942, during the Battle of Bataan (January 7 – April 9, 1942), Calugas left his kitchen duties when the Philippine guns fell silent. He gathered up some volunteers and rushed across 1,000 yards of falling shells to take command of a 75mm gun, its crew killed and wounded by Japanese artillery. Moving at intervals to escape retaliation from the Japanese guns, Calugas and his crew stymied the Japanese advance and provided covering fire for the 88th Field Artillery to withdraw.

Although Calugas' Medal of Honor was announced a month later, it would be three years before he would have it placed around his neck. Surviving nine months in a POW camp, Calugas escaped Japanese captivity to fight against the occupation as a guerrilla in unit #227 Old Bronco. When the US arrived to retake the Philippines in January 1945, Calugas was waiting for them.

Commissioned into the 44th Infantry Regiment of the US Army, Calugas retired in 1957 with the rank of captain and settled in Tacoma, Washington.



ABOVE The US and Philippine defenders surrender their last redoubt on the island of Corregidor, May 6, 1942. National Archives and Records Administration



MAJOR WILLIAM THORNTON WATSON

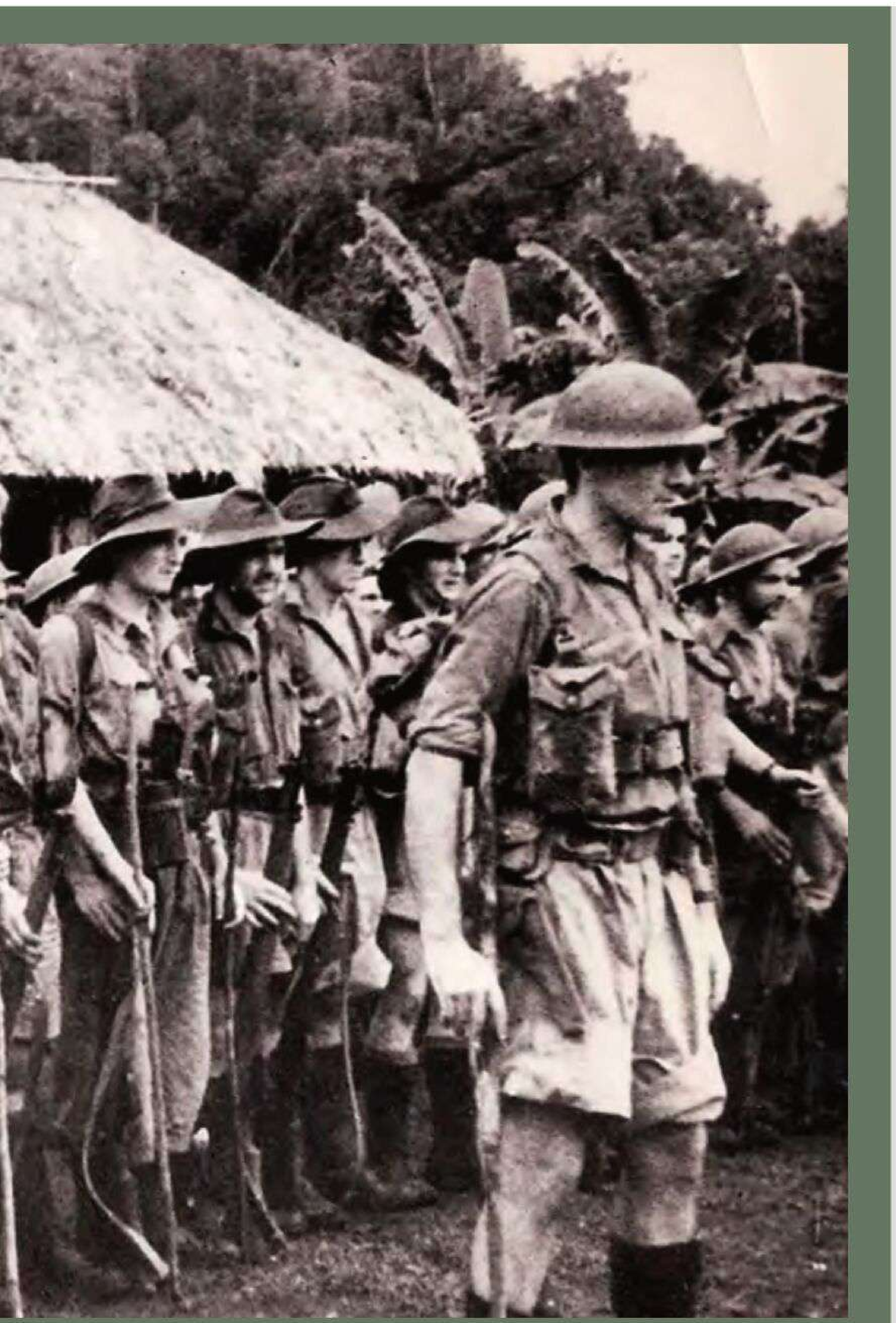
November 10, 1887 – September 9, 1961

Australian Army | Distinguished Service Order; Military Cross with bar; Distinguished Conduct Medal

NEW ZEALAND-BORN 'Billy' Watson had his rugby career curtailed by the outbreak of the World War One, becoming one of the first Australian troops to see action during the capture of the German wireless station in German New Guinea. He then served in the 1st Field Artillery Brigade at Gallipoli, and on the Western Front and was promoted from the ranks, first being awarded the DCM in November 1917 and raised to lieutenant, then the Military Cross for action at Faucoucourt in August 1918 and bar for Bellicourt in October 1918.

Between the wars, Watson sought his fortune in New Guinea, attempting gold mining and cattle ranching amongst other things. The threat of invasion saw him return to the colours where his knowledge of the island and its dialects – as well as his prestigious military record – made him an obvious pick to command the 1st Battalion Papuan Infantry Battalion, a locally raised force of only 280 auxiliaries whose bushcraft made them better scouts than their poor training made them infantry.

During the Kokoda Track campaign (July 21 – November 16, 1942), elements of the 39th Battalion, and Papuan Infantry under the command of Lt. Col. William T. Owen occupied the village of Kokoda and struggled for two days to hold its valuable mountain airstrip against the battle-hardened Japanese 144th Infantry Regiment. With no means of returning the Japanese's deadly accurate mortar fire, the



ABOVE Major William Thorton Watson, 1st Papuan Infantry Battalion, in 1943. Australian War Memorial

TOP The battered survivors of the 39th Battalion Citizen Military Forces parade after weeks of fierce fighting on the Kokoda Track, September 1942. Australian Army Museum of Western Australia

First Battle of Kokoda (July 28 – 29, 1942) ended with Owen's death and the defenders withdrawing under cover of fog, led by Watson, who remained in command until he was relieved on August 4.

For his bravery and leadership, Watson was awarded the Distinguished Service Order and promoted to major. He remained in command of the PIB until March 30, 1944, where they continued to act as a reconnaissance screen for the Australian and American forces in New Guinea.

PRIVATE BRUCE STEEL KINGSBURY

January 8, 1918
– August 29, 1942

Australian Army | Victoria Cross

ENLISTING IN May 1940 for the Second Australian Imperial Force, Kingsbury served with 2/14th Battalion in Palestine, Egypt, and Syria before the AIF were redirected in January 1942 with the outbreak of war with Japan.

Among the first regulars into the fray to relieve the 39th Battalion, 2/14th took up defensive positions around the village of Isurava on August 26, 1942. Only two days later, the Battle of Isurava (August 26-31, 1942) began with wave upon wave of Japanese infantry following a heavy bombardment from guns in the mountains above them.

During the savage close-quarter fighting on August 29, the Japanese broke through the Australian right flank to threaten the battalion HQ and the entire position. Bren gunner Corporal Lindsay 'Teddy' Bear was wounded in the attack, shot in the foot, knee, thigh and shoulder. With a "Right-o, Bruce, it's over to you," he passed the steaming gun to Kingsbury. Firing the Bren from the hip, he charged forwards with a shout of "follow me!" and broke the Japanese line with an unrelenting arc of machine gun fire, driving them back into the darkness of the jungle.

As the rest of the platoon joined him, a Japanese sniper cut Kingsbury down and he was killed instantly. The first VC of the New Guinea campaign – and the only one awarded on the murderous Kokoda Track – the 24-year old Kingsbury's courage saved 2/14th from ruin.

ABOVE Melbourne-born Private Bruce Steel Kingsbury, 2/14th Australian Infantry Battalion. Australian War Memorial

ABOVE A soldier of 2/10 Battalion AIF fires a Bren gun from the hip as he moves through the New Guinea bush. Australian Army Museum of Western Australia

ABOVE The family of Private Bruce Kingsbury receive his Victoria Cross, 1943. His parents are in the centre of the photograph. State Library of Victoria

SERGEANT MAJOR SIR JACOB CHARLES VOUZA

1892 – March 15, 1984

Solomon Islands Protectorate Armed Constabulary | George Cross; Legion of Merit; Silver Star; Member of the British Empire

ABOVE Sergeant Major Jacob C. Vouza during the war, when he served as a Coastwatcher and guide to the US Marines during the Battle of Guadalcanal, 1942.
USMC Archives

SERGEANT MAJOR Vouza had just retired after 25 years of service on the island of Guadalcanal when the Japanese invaded the sleepy British protectorate. He immediately returned to active duty, serving as a Coastwatcher, one of a network of 1,500 indigenous volunteers who reported on Japanese movements.

He left an impression on his US allies during the Battle of Guadalcanal (August 7, 1942 – February 9, 1943), rescuing a navy pilot who was shot down behind Japanese lines and returning him to the 1st Marine Division. Vouza then volunteered as a scout for the Marines and on August 27, 1942, he was captured whilst trying to find suspected Japanese positions.

Vouza was tied to a tree and interrogated about the American strength and disposition, but he refused to talk. The loyal constable was tortured for hours, bayoneted in the arms, shoulder, stomach, throat, and face, and left to die in the jungle. He managed to free himself by chewing through his ropes and crawled three miles through the bush to the Marines, warning them of the Japanese.

After 12 days in hospital undergoing surgery and numerous blood transfusions, Vouza rejoined his comrades and took the 2nd Marine Raider Battalion behind Japanese lines over November and December 1942. His courage and devotion to duty were honoured by both the British and US forces. The Silver Star was awarded for his ‘great strength and supernatural endurance’ under torture and the rescue of the downed pilot, the Legion of Merit for his campaign with the 2nd Raiders, and the George Medal for his outstanding devotion to duty.

After the war, Vouza remained devoted to the Solomon Islands and in 1979 he was awarded an MBE and knighted by Queen Elizabeth II for his lifetime of service.

LEFT Sergeant Major Jacob C. Vouza in tropical white dress uniform is reunited with his comrade-in-arms, Major Martin Clemens, a British colonial administrator who organised the Coastwatchers during World War Two.
USMC Archives

GUNNERY SERGEANT JOHN BASILONE

November 6, 1916 – February 19, 1945

US Marine Corps | Medal of Honor; Navy Cross

THE ONLY Marine to receive both the Medal of Honor and the Navy Cross during World War Two, John Basilone reached further fame as a protagonist of the 2010 HBO miniseries, *The Pacific*.

As a sergeant during the Battle of Guadalcanal, he was placed in command of two .30-calibre machine gun sections of 1st Battalion, 7th Marines holding the narrow pass at the Tenaru River when on the night of October 24, 1942, an entire Japanese regiment of 3,000 men converged on their position. Amid the constant crump of enemy mortars and grenades, one of the guns fell silent.

Instantly, Basilone hefted as much ammunition as he could carry and raced through 200 yards of enemy fire towards the second gun crew, Throughout the battle, Basilone continued to run from position to position, carrying ammunition and supplies, and helping his marines clear jams. Somewhere along the way, Basilone lost his asbestos gloves – the only way of safely handling the red-hot barrels of the M1917 Browning – and as the firefight reached fever pitch, he lifted the gun from its position and oblivious to the agony, continued to fire it singlehandedly.

By the time the Japanese withdrew, only Basilone and two other marines were still standing, surrounded by a carpet of dead and dying. Basilone himself accounted for at least 38 kills. After returning home on a War Bond roadshow, Basilone was offered a comfortable

commission in Washington, DC, but opted to return to the front for the Battle of Iwo Jima (February 19 – March 26, 1945). On the first day of the battle, he led his new recruits off the killing field of Red Beach and took out a Japanese blockhouse, before being killed by enemy artillery. His Navy Cross was awarded posthumously for his 'dauntless courage and iron determination'.

ABOVE Then-Sergeant John Basilone at a visit to the US Marine Corps headquarters in Washington, DC, during his home front tour, September 1943. USMC Archives

TOP A wounded Marine is carried back to safety on Guadalcanal, 1942. USMC Archives

LIEUTENANT THOMAS CURRIE DERRICK

March 20, 1914 – May 24, 1945

Australian Army | Victoria Cross; Distinguished Conduct Medal

ABOVE Peers pay their respects to Lieutenant Tom Derrick as he is laid to rest on Tarakan Island, Borneo, 1945. State Library of Victoria

ADELAIDE'S TOM 'Diver' Derrick is regarded as being the purest embodiment of Australia's fighting spirit. Sailing for the Middle East with the 2/48th Battalion, Derrick served at the Siege of Tobruk, where he was promoted to corporal, then sergeant, and recommended for the Military Medal, which failed to materialise. He got his second chance at glory at the First Battle of El Alamein and was awarded the Distinguished Conduct Medal, destroying two German tanks with sticky bombs.

ABOVE The Australian flag flutters over Sattelberg where it was raised at the climax of 'Derrick's Show'. State Library of Victoria

At the Second Battle of El Alamein, his third chance at honours received its second rebuff after he took out three machine gun nests whilst standing completely exposed atop a gun carrier armed with a Thompson sub-machine gun. Witnesses thought he was a shoo-in for the VC, but this wasn't his time – instead, it was waiting for him in the Southwest Pacific.

At the Battle of Sattelberg (November 17 – 25, 1943) on the Huon Peninsula of New Guinea, Derrick – now company sergeant major – climbed a sheer cliff face to get the drop on a Japanese position that the platoon had been trying to outflank for two hours. Within 20 minutes, he personally cleared seven posts with grenades and rifle fire, the stunned Japanese in the town below picked up and fled.

After leading the platoon in mopping up the remaining Japanese dugouts in what they were already calling 'Derrick's Show', the battalion commander insisted that the likeable CSM personally raise the Australian flag above Sattelberg. For his dash at Sattelberg, Derrick was at last awarded the Victoria Cross.

Later promoted to lieutenant, Derrick's luck ran out during the Battle of Tarakan. Hit by five bullets from a Japanese machine gunner, he died during surgery on May 24, 1945.

PRIVATE FIRST CLASS GUY LOUIS GABALDON

March 22, 1926 – August 31, 2006

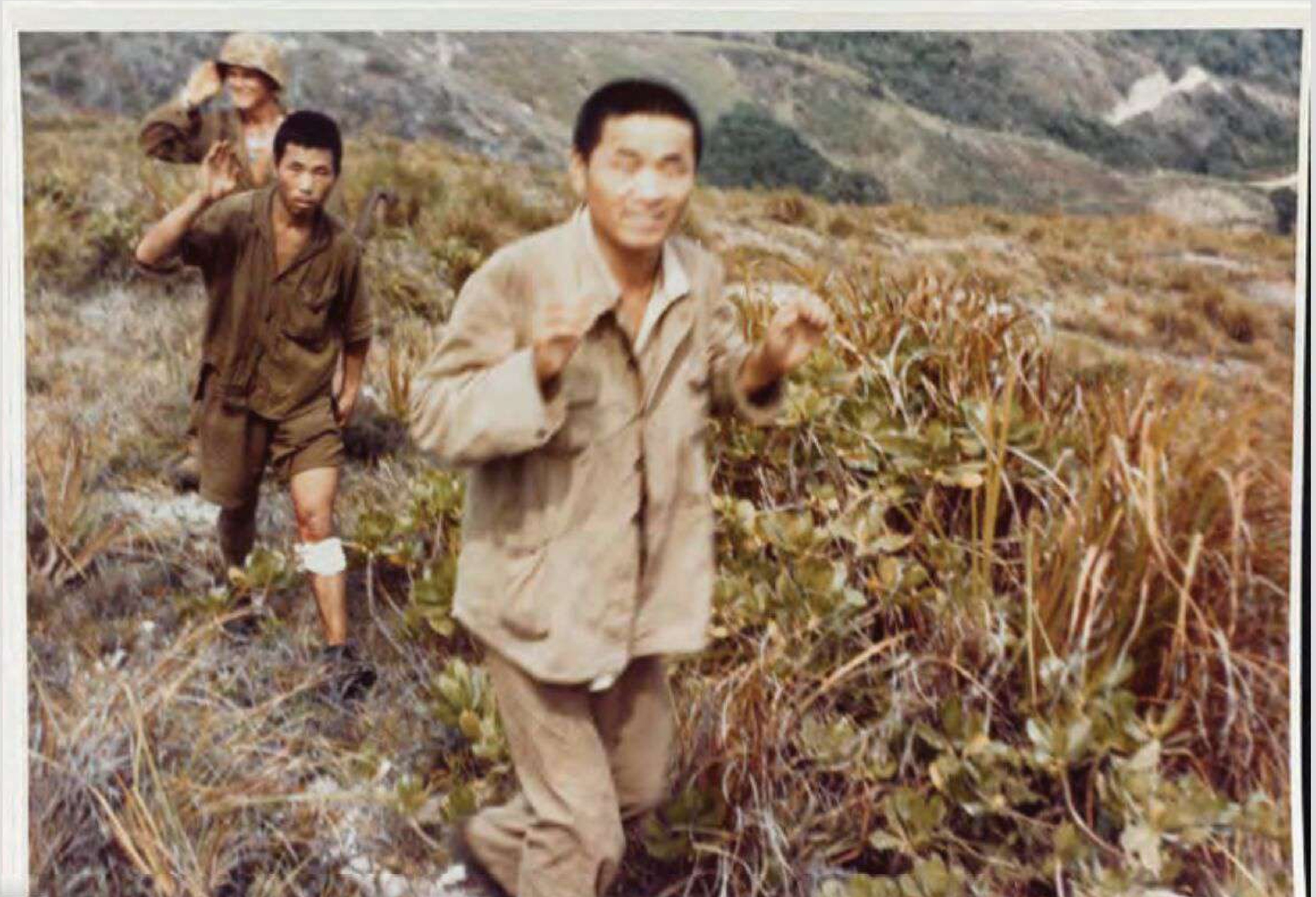
US Marine Corps | Navy Cross

KNOWN TO his friends as 'Gabby', Gabaldon's colourful upbringing led to him becoming one of the most unlikely heroes of the USMC. As a youth in Los Angeles, he shined shoes and ran with a street gang, before the 12-year-old Mexican-American tearaway moved out of his family home and moved in with a Japanese family, the Nekanos.

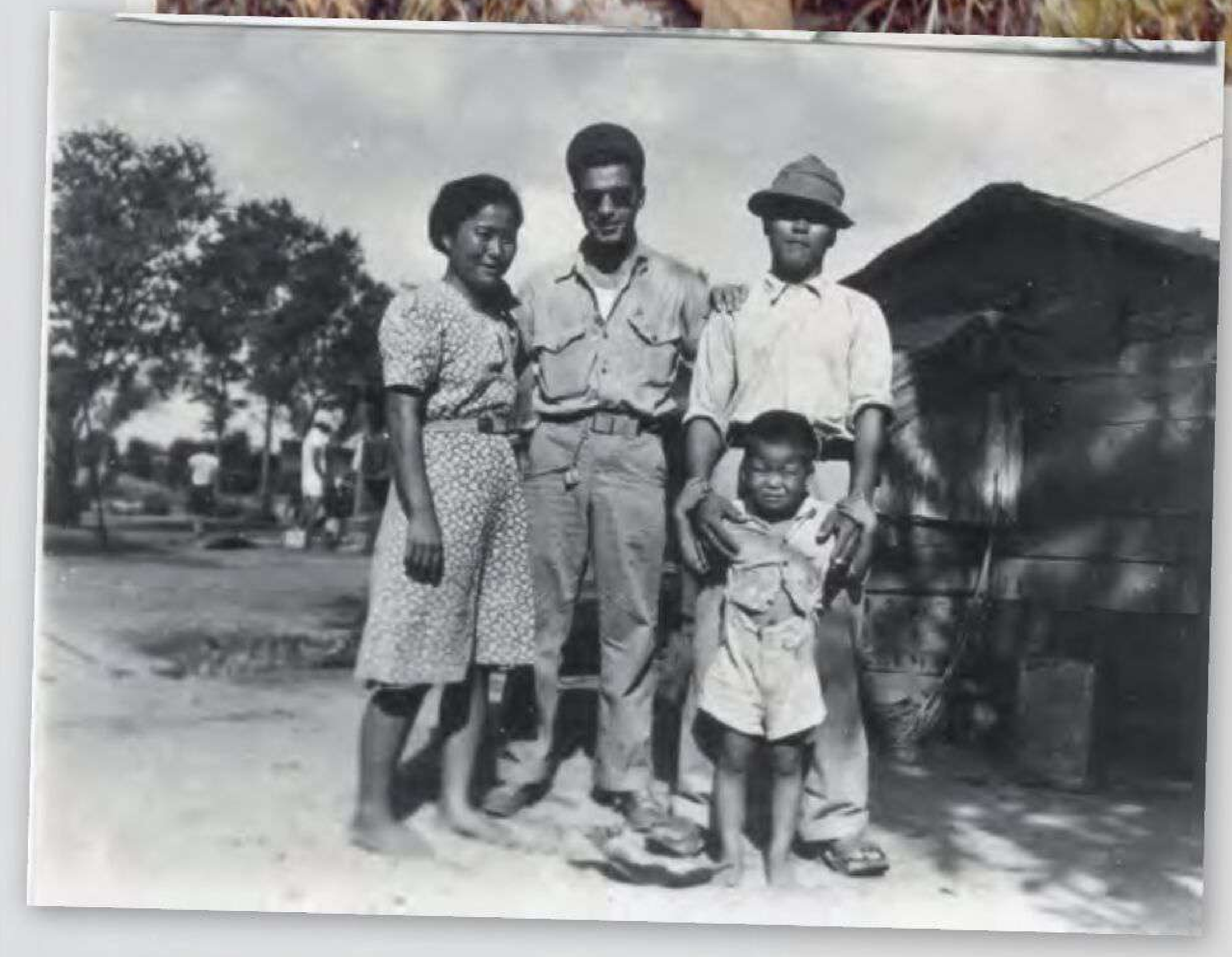
This ended with Pearl Harbor when the Nekanos were interned with so many other Japanese-Americans. Two years later, Gabaldon was old enough to enlist and despite his unimpressive 5'4" frame, his language skills were enough to convince the USMC recruiter.

Within days of the Battle of Saipan (June 15 – July 9, 1944), Gabaldon was deeply affected by seeing Japanese civilians leap from cliffs rather than surrender to the Americans, and soldiers making futile banzai charges into American guns. Gabaldon had enough 'street Japanese' (as he called it) to negotiate surrenders of both soldiers and civilians. Dubbed the 'Pied Piper of Saipan', he would go AWOL from his post in order to search caves and bunkers, leading anywhere between 800 and 1,500 prisoners back to the US lines.

He was accused of inflating his numbers – especially the number of soldiers rather than civilians he brought in. This, as well as his repeated insubordination, might account for Gabaldon's recommended Medal of Honor being met with a Silver Star, although it was finally upgraded to the Navy Cross in 1960. Gabaldon's talent for self-aggrandisement may have tipped the scales as that same year his exploits made the big screen in the movie *Hell to Eternity*.



ABOVE A Marine brings in two Japanese prisoners on Saipan, July 4, 1944. USMC Archives



LEFT Private First Class Guy Gabaldon at the Saipan stockade with a young Japanese family that he persuaded to surrender, 1944. USMC Archives

COLONEL HENRY ANDREWS MUCCI

March 4, 1909 – April 20, 1997

US Army | Distinguished Service Cross; Silver Star; Legion of Merit; Soldier's Medal; Bronze Star

INITIALLY REJECTED from West Point for being too short, Henry Mucci's sheer determination and force of personality turned him into one of the founding fathers of the US special forces when he was picked to create a new Ranger Battalion fit for jungle warfare. His raw materials were the 98th Field Artillery, a force of farm boys and ranch hands sent to New Guinea in the belief that mule-hauled mountain guns still had something to offer.

Mucci took 500 volunteers and drilled them relentlessly in commando techniques until by July 1944 they were re-designated the 6th Ranger Infantry Battalion and sent to join the long-awaited invasion of the Philippines. Following the Japanese massacre of 139 POWs at Palawan Barracks prison camp on December 14, 1944, Mucci's mob were tasked with liberating Cabanatuan Prison Camp (also known as Pangatian) north of Manila.

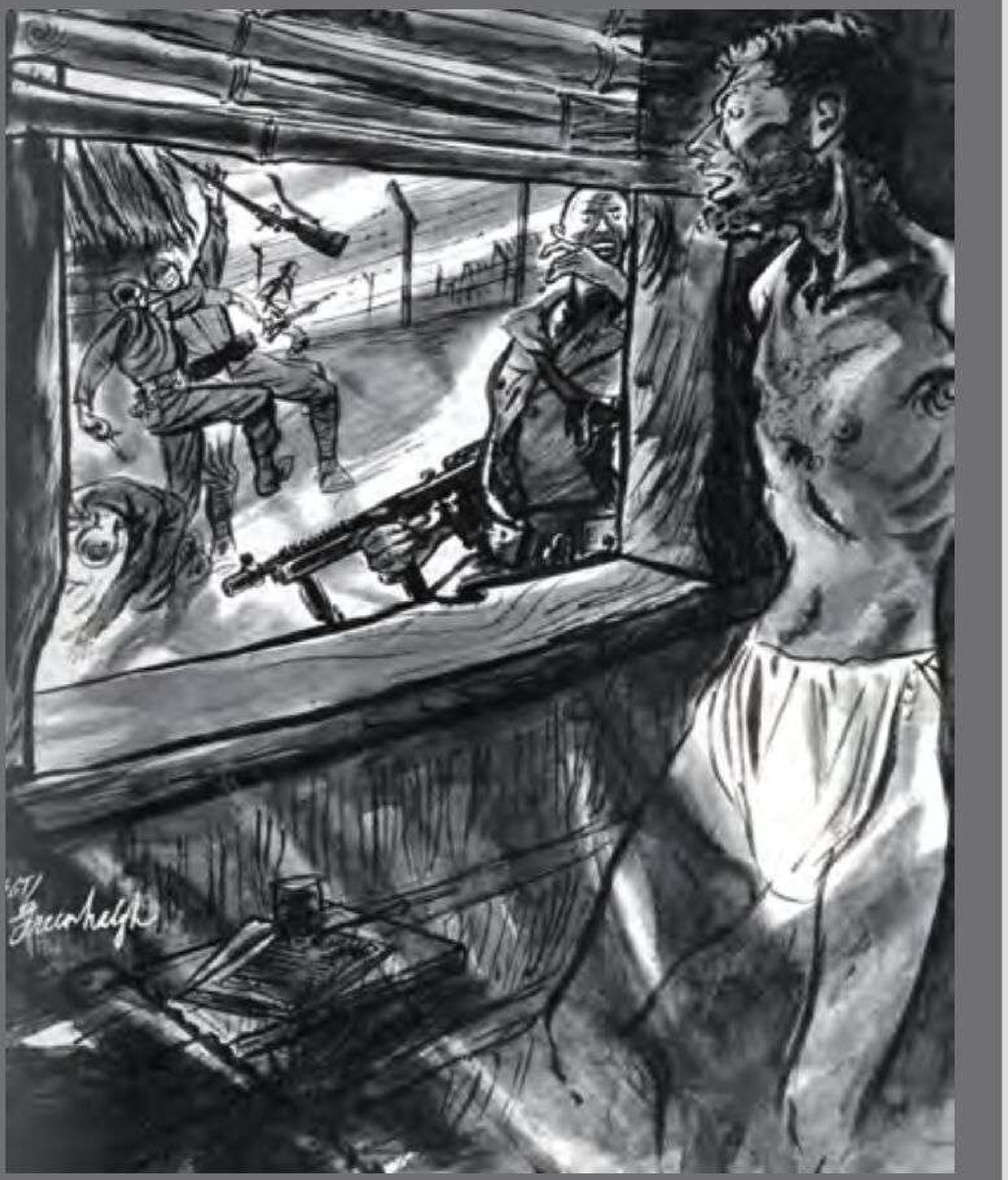
Working with Filipino guerrillas and the Alamo Scouts (6th Army Special Reconnaissance Unit), 121 men of the 6th Rangers slipped 30 miles through the Japanese lines. On the night of January 30, 1945, the telephone lines were cut, the Rangers opened fire on guard towers and forced open the main gate. Two truckloads of guards attempting to flee were

ABOVE Lieutenant Colonel Mucci (third left in the front row) poses with a number of the US Marines that he freed from Cabanatuan, March 1945. **USMC Archives**

ABOVE LEFT Lieutenant Colonel Henry A. Mucci, commander of the 6th Ranger Infantry Battalion, pictured at the time of the Cabanatuan raid.

ambushed, a garage containing tanks was destroyed, and the bridge over the Cabu River was detonated, stranding Japanese reinforcements.

A total of 489 POWs and 33 civilian internees were rescued at a cost of only two Rangers and two prisoners killed, and four Rangers wounded. Somewhere between 530 and 1,000 Japanese were killed and four tanks destroyed. Although Mucci was recommended for the Medal of Honor, he received the Distinguished Service Cross instead and was promoted to colonel.



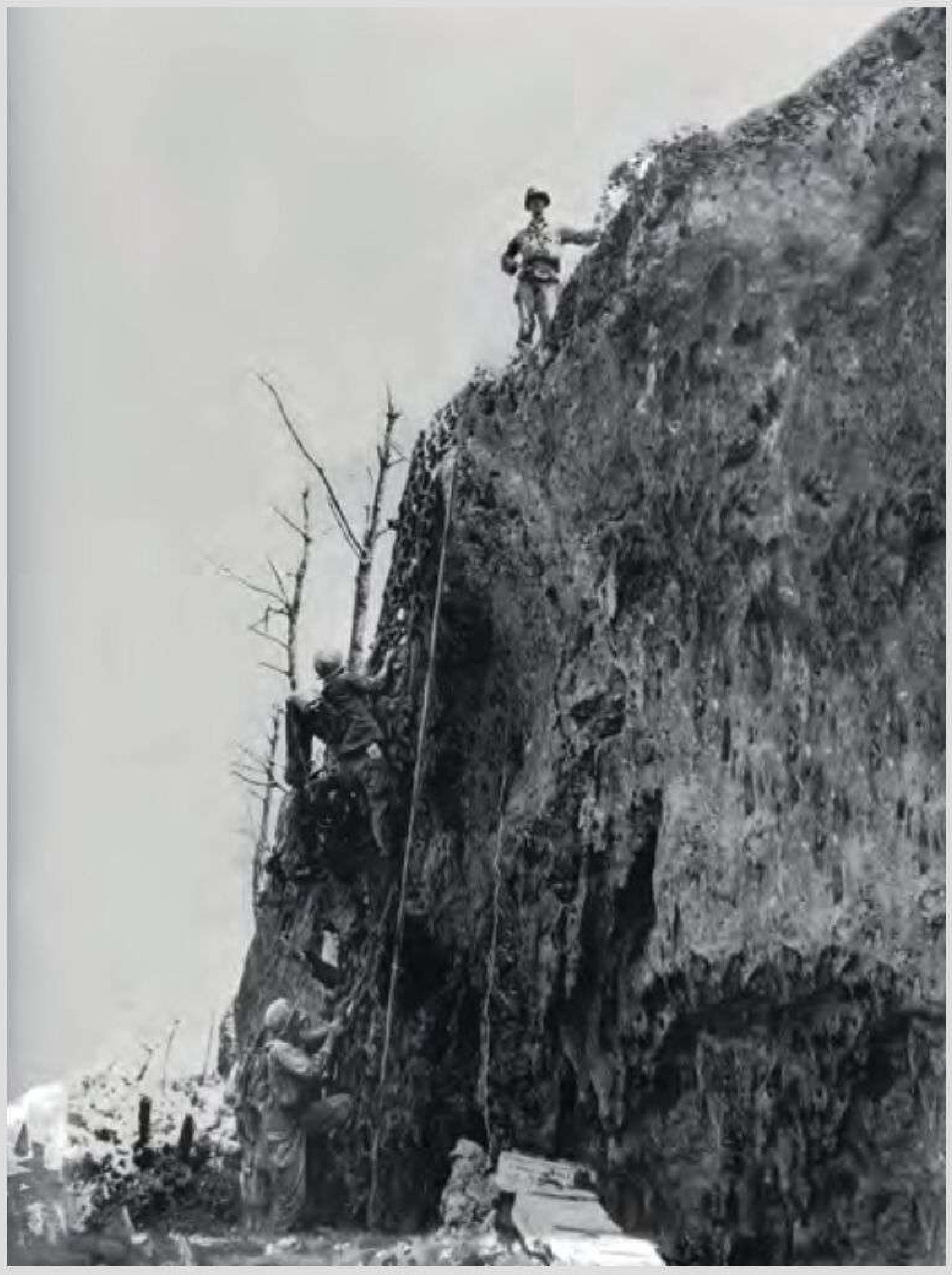
ABOVE An illustration of the 'Great Raid' on Cabanatuan Prison Camp in *Yank – The Army Weekly* Vol. 3 No. 37 (March 2, 1945).

CORPORAL DESMOND THOMAS DOSS

February 7, 1919 – March 23, 2006

US Army | Medal of Honor; Bronze Star

ALONE AMONGST the 23 Medals of Honor awarded for the bloody Battle of Okinawa (April 1 – June 22, 1945), this one was earned by a soldier who refused to fight. The first and only conscientious objector (he preferred "conscientious co-operator") to earn the Medal of Honor in the World War Two, the story of Desmond Doss was dramatized in the 2016 blockbuster *Hacksaw Ridge*.



ABOVE Corporal Desmond T. Doss receives the Medal of Honor from President Harry S. Truman, 1945. **Library of Virginia**

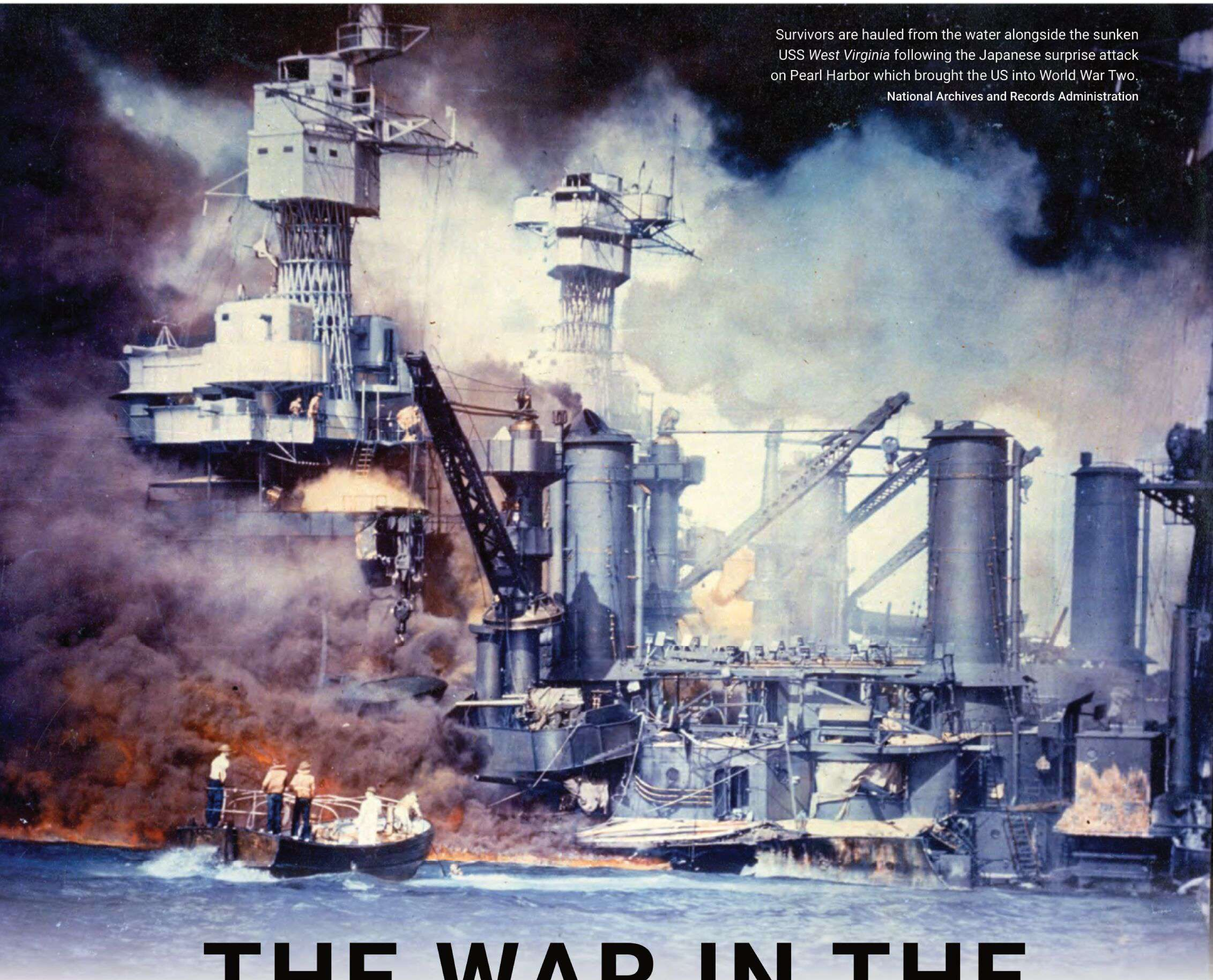
LEFT Private First Class Desmond T. Doss stands atop the Maeda Escarpment on Okinawa, known as the notorious Hacksaw Ridge, May 4, 1945.

A devout Seventh-Day Adventist, Doss refused to take up arms but insisted on doing his duty in a conflict that he believed was morally right. Though eschewing weapons training made him few friends in his unit, Doss persevered and joined the 307th Infantry Regiment as a medic.

Any doubts his comrades had about his courage evaporated in the Battles of Guam (July 21 – August 10, 1944) and Leyte (October 17 – December 26, 1944) where he was honoured on both occasions with a Bronze Star for treating the wounded under fire. The final test of his faith was at Okinawa on the murderous Maeda Escarpment where the Japanese defenders moved through a network of tunnels from bunker to bunker. Under intense fire, Doss continued to treat the wounded as he had before.

On May 5, the cost had been so bloody that the 307th was ordered to retreat. However, whilst men remained on the escarpment too wounded to make their own escape, Doss refused to leave them and successfully rescued 75 wounded, lowering them by rope one at a time. Seriously wounded later in the campaign, Doss continued to put others first – at one point crawling off his stretcher when he spotted a more severely injured man nearby.

On October 12, 1945, he was awarded the Medal of Honor by President Harry S. Truman.



Survivors are hauled from the water alongside the sunken USS *West Virginia* following the Japanese surprise attack on Pearl Harbor which brought the US into World War Two.
National Archives and Records Administration

THE WAR IN THE EASTERN SEAS

1941 - 1945

THE WAR in East Asia began with a crushing blow dealt against US sea power at Pearl Harbor. Conscious that its only hope of defeating the superior economic power of the US, Japan launched a sudden devastating strike against the Pacific Fleet anchored at Pearl Harbor naval base in Hawaii.

On the morning of December 7, 1941, a storm cloud of 177 aircraft of the Imperial Japanese Navy attacked airfields and hangers, before launching torpedoes at the ships. A second wave of 163 planes attacked an hour later. The loss of life and materiel was staggering: 21 battleships sunk or damaged, 188 aircraft destroyed, and 2,403 men and women killed.

Almost simultaneously, invasions began of British and Dutch territories in South East Asia, and on the US protectorate of the Philippines. The principal objective of Pearl Harbor had been achieved, and the damage done was catastrophic to American readiness.

Britain, meanwhile, had focused its efforts on the war in Europe and the bulk of its own formidable naval power was committed to the Mediterranean, the Atlantic and the North Sea, with only a handful of antiques left to protect Singapore, Hong Kong, and Malaya. The battle for the Mediterranean also included elements of the Royal Australian Navy, the Indian Navy, and the Royal New Zealand Navy, many of whom hastened for Singapore – headquarters of the Eastern Fleet – as tensions with Japan rose.

In the main, Britain's naval plans relied upon the participation of the United States and hadn't prepared for the Japanese seizure of French Indochina (now Vietnam) which allowed them to extend their air cover and quickly achieve air superiority over the spartan RAF presence.

COOK THIRD CLASS DORIS MILLER

October 12, 1919 – November 24, 1943

United States Navy | Navy Cross

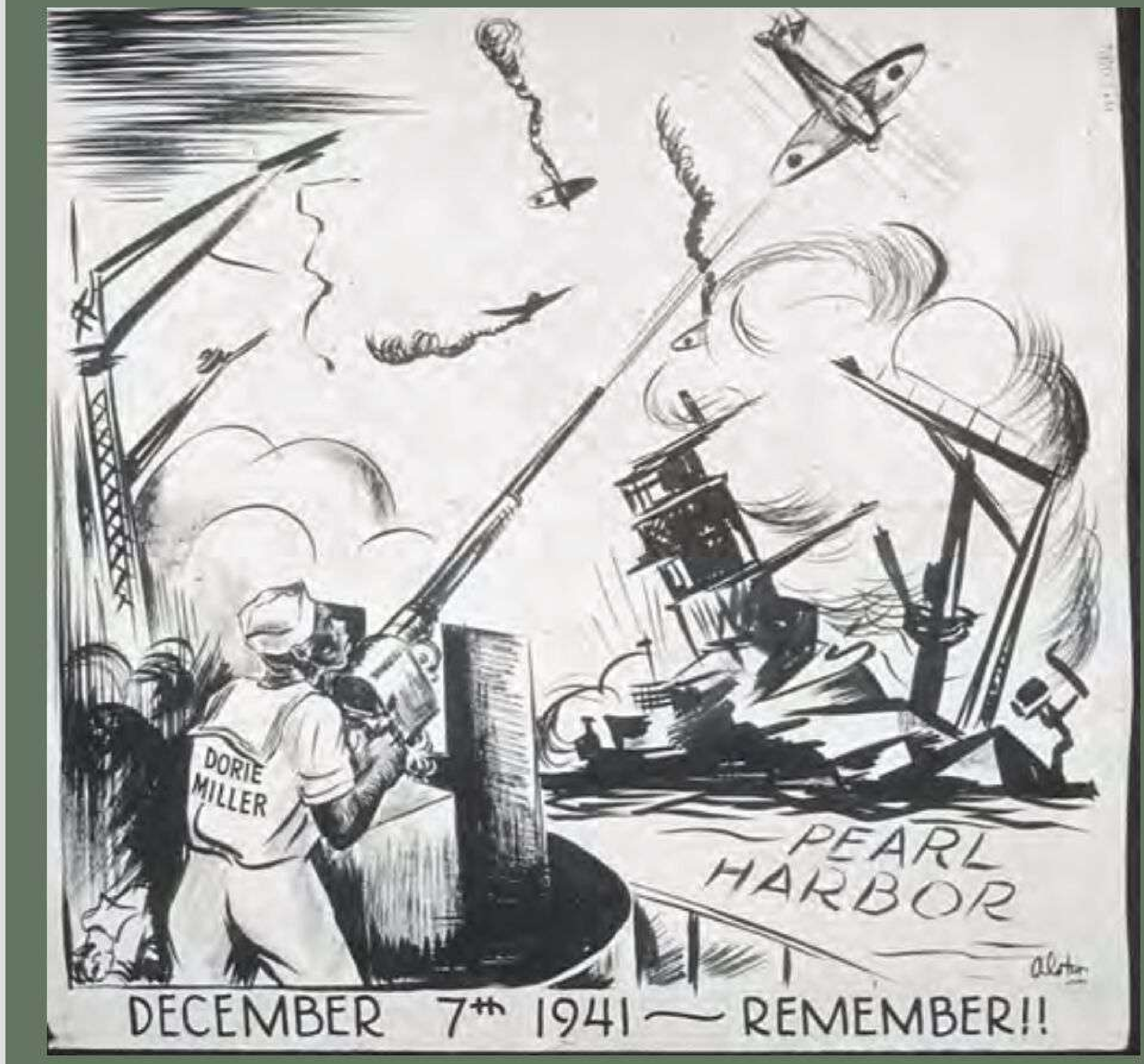
ABOVE Mess Attendant Third Class Doris Miller shortly after being presented with the Navy Cross on May 27, 1942. National Archives and Records Administration

THE JAPANESE attack on Pearl Harbor gave many opportunities for ordinary men and women to become heroes, and Mess Attendant Third Class Doris 'Dorie' Miller is a perfect example. Miller was already on duty aboard the anchored USS *West Virginia* (BB 48) at the time of the attack, gathering up soiled laundry – the speciality of mess attendant to the ship's white officers being the only one open to African-Americans – and hastened to his battle station. There he found that a Japanese torpedo had already done its work and the compartment was fast flooding.

Miller immediately sought orders and bumped into the ship's communications officer, Lieutenant Commander Dior C. Johnson who urged him on to the signals deck where the ship's commander, Captain Mervyn Sharp Bennion, was dying from a yawning shrapnel wound in his abdomen. Miller, a heavyweight boxing champion who had left school to work his parents' farm, hoisted Bannion up into his arms and carried him to cover. By now, struck by two bombs and seven torpedoes, *Western Virginia* was listing dangerously in the water, but one machine gun continued barking its defiance towards the sky. Lieutenant J. C. Frederic H. White ordered Miller to begin feeding him belts of ammunition. Seeing the Browning next to White's hanging limply, Miller joined in the defence, White guiding him as best he could.

He later said: "When the Japanese bombers attacked my ship at Pearl Harbor I forgot all about the fact that I and other Negroes can be only messmen in the Navy and are not taught how to man an anti-aircraft gun."

With Bannion pronounced dead and the ammunition spent, the defenders began to abandon ship, with the muscular messman helping his fellows out of the flooded lower compartments, and into the harbour. Reportedly one of the last men to leave the ship, they swam to shore as burning oil and Japanese machine-gun fire filled the water with death. Miller became the first African American to receive the Navy Cross and his story raised the profile of civil rights as men and women wondered for the first time why the colour of his skin made this heroic young man who stood firm against catastrophe, suitable only for cooking and cleaning. Sadly, Miller didn't survive to reap the rewards. Now a cook third class, Miller died on November 24, 1943 when his new berth, the escort carrier USS *Liscome Bay* was torpedoed at the Battle of Makin.



ABOVE "December 7th – Remember!!" An illustration by war artist Charles Alston of Doris 'Dorie' Miller opening fire at Pearl Harbor. National Archives and Records Administration

The Royal Navy's attempt to see off the invasion of Malaya ended with its most formidable battleships in the theatre, the newly launched HMS *Prince of Wales,* and its older escort HMS *Repulse*, sunk by Japanese torpedo bombers on December 10, 1941. Following the collapse of Singapore on February 15, 1942, the Commonwealth navies were effectively banished to their own territorial waters.

However, Pearl Harbor hadn't been the killing blow that the Japanese had hoped for. The juiciest targets of the raid – the three aircraft carriers USS *Enterprise* (CV-6), USS *Lexington* (CV-2), and USS *Saratoga* (CV-3) – were out on manoeuvres and escaped unscathed. Japan's dreams of a short, sharp shock that would deliver them an Asian empire began to crumble at the Battle of the Coral Sea (May 4-8, 1942) when a major Japanese naval offensive was stopped in its tracks, and then Battle of Midway (June 4, 1942). At Midway, only six months after Pearl Harbor, Japan lost four carriers and a cruiser at the cost of only one US carrier and one destroyer.

Using Australia as its staging post, the US went on the offensive in New Guinea and the Solomon Islands, the navy leading the way in an 'island hopping' campaign of amphibious landings. The Royal Navy, unable to maintain the vast supply lines across the Pacific, and only able to commit more resources to East Asia from 1944, stuck to coastal operations and escort. Nonetheless, experience was shared and gained by the loan of Illustrious-class carrier HMS *Victorious* to the US Pacific Fleet in 1943, and the next year USS *Saratoga* (CV-3) joined the British Eastern Fleet.

In 1945, a newly formed British Pacific Fleet – containing RN, RAN, and RNZN vessels – proved its worth under overall command of the US Fifth Fleet during the Battle of Okinawa (April 1 – June 22, 1945) and the final strikes against Japan itself before surrender.

LIEUTENANT COMMANDER WHEELER BRYSON LIPES

July 12, 1920 – April 17, 2005

US Navy | Navy Commendation Medal

ABOVE LCDR Wheeler B. Lipes (right) receives a commendation on the occasion of his retirement, November 30, 1962. Navy Bureau of Medicine and Surgery (BUMED)

BEFORE THE war, Wheeler B. Lipes had been a lab tech at the naval hospital in Philadelphia. *As* Pharmacist's Mate First Class aboard USS *Seadragon* (SS-194) off the Dutch East Indies, he found himself forced to perform an emergency appendectomy beneath enemy waters. Although he wasn't a doctor, the 23-year-old had assisted in appendectomies before – although they had been performed on land in surgical conditions and with surgical equipment, and by experienced medics. Realising that Seaman First Class Darrel D. Rector would almost certainly die as a result of acute appendicitis and that getting him to a hospital simply wasn't an option, on September 11, 1942, the wardroom table became an operating theatre. A blade held in a hemostatic clamp became Lipes' scalpel, five bent spoons were used to hold the incision open, boiling water and alcohol drained from the torpedo mechanism was used for sterilisation, and a tea-strainer covered in gauze was soaked in ether to put Rector to sleep.

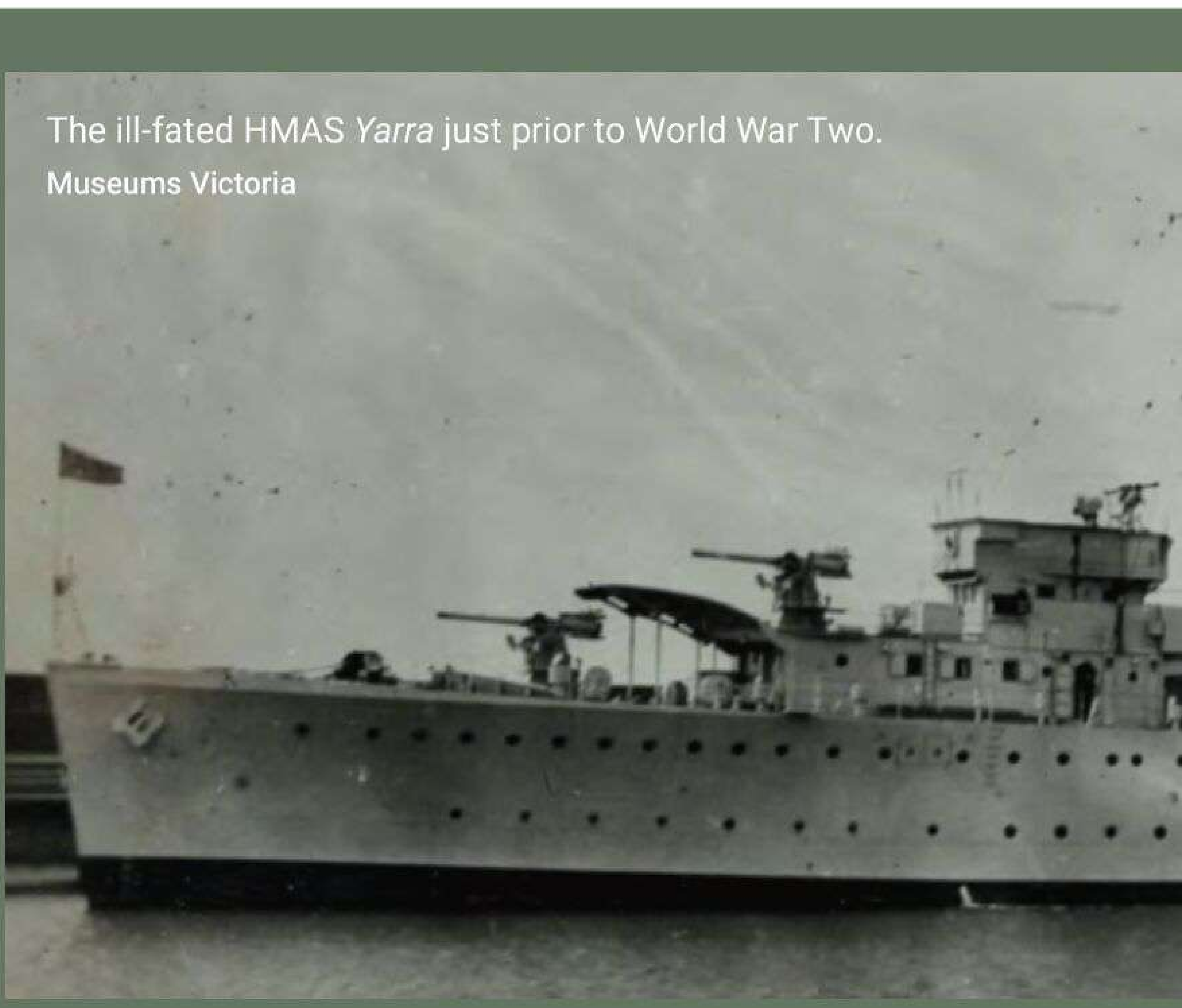
With the boat's entire crew involved in some way, Lipes removed the appendix, cauterised the stump with carbolic acid and then used ground Sulfonamide tablets to prevent infection. Within a few days, Rector was back on duty.

A report concluded: "While it is by no means desirable to encourage major surgical procedures on naval personnel by other than qualified surgeons […] the operation was performed under difficult circumstances and with pioneering fortitude and resourcefulness; and that the result was entirely satisfactory."

Lipes retired from the Navy Medical Service Corps in 1962 with the rank of lieutenant commander and his heroism was finally honoured in 2005 with the Navy Commendation Medal only a few months before his death.

"I just didn't think it was that big a deal," he said in an interview with *The Roanoke Times*. "I was just proud to save a guy's life."

ABOVE USS *Seadragon* (SS-194) off the Mare Island Navy Yard, California on August 5, 1944. Naval History and Heritage Command



The ill-fated HMAS *Yarra* just prior to World War Two. Museums Victoria

CHIEF ORDNANCE ARTIFICER PETER CAJETAN MASCARENHAS

Unknown

Royal Indian Navy | Distinguished Service Medal

REGRETTABLY, THE life of Chief Ordnance Artificer (a specialist chief petty officer) Peter Cajetan Mascarenhas is difficult to trace beyond the bold action that earned him the DSM. His name alone would suggest that he was from a Christian family in the southeast of India, where the state of Goa endured as a Portuguese colony until 1961.

His ship, the Clyde-built sloop HMIS *Jumna* was commissioned in early 1941, serving in the Mediterranean before being transferred to the Royal Navy's East Indies Station to resist the Empire of Japan. By early 1942 she had been tasked with defending Batavia (now Jakarta) harbour, the capital of the Dutch East Indies, with her anti-aircraft guns. As the colony crumbled, HMIS *Jumna* and the Australian sloop HMAS *Yarra* led a final convoy of merchantmen towards the Sunda Straits between the islands of Java and Sumatra. The straits connect the Java Sea to the Indian Ocean.

Despite the closeness of the Japanese advance only three hours behind them, the convoy miraculously avoided encountering any enemy cruisers, but they were spotted by Japanese seaplanes. Shortly afterwards, they came under sustained attack from Japanese bombers that concentrated their fire on the oil tanker RFA *British Judge*.

HMIS *Jumna* and HMAS *Yarra* put up such a stream of anti-aircraft fire that the enemy turned its attention from the convoy to the two escort ships. As *Yarra*'s ammunition dwindled to the point it could only fire in its own defence, it fell to *Jumna* to keep up the terrible tempo of anti-aircraft fire.

Over the course of February 28, 1942, *Jumna* shot down a confirmed three planes – possibly four – whilst *Yarra* claimed one. Amongst the honours

awarded was the Distinguished Service Medal for Chief Ordnance Artificer Mascarenhas who worked in the open to repair guns whilst Japanese machine-gun fire raked the deck all around him.

On clearing Sunda Straits, HMAS *Yarra* led the convoy to Freemantle, Western Australia, whilst HMIS *Jumna* sailed for Colombo in what is now Sri Lanka. Only 45 miles north of the Australian territory of Cocos Islands, the convoy that *Jumna* and its crew had fought so bitterly to protect was attacked by a flotilla of three Japanese cruisers and two destroyers. Only 34 of *Yarra*'s crew survived the sinking.

When *Jumna* arrived at Columbo on March 6, 1942 the crew were shocked to discover they had been presumed sunk. On March 13, the crew of the only vessel to survive the flight from Batavia was congratulated by Vice-Admiral Sir Herbert Fitzherbert, Flag Officer Commanding the Royal Indian Navy, for the 'first-class show that Jumna put up'.

ABOVE CPO Peter Cajetan Mascarenhas in the 1964 official history, *The Royal Indian Navy 1939–1945*.

LIEUTENANT THOMAS WILKINSON

August 1, 1898 – February 14, 1942

Royal Naval Reserve

| Victoria Cross

ABOVE Temporary Lieutenant Thomas Wilkinson in the uniform of the merchant navy.

NEITHER THE 43-year old Temporary Lieutenant Thomas Wilkinson nor his command, HMS *Li Wo* was built for war. Originally the SS *Li Wo* was a shallow bottomed Yangtze River passenger steamer and Wilkinson its captain, but in 1940 – with the Japanese threat growing – ship and crew were commissioned into the Royal Navy and sailed to Singapore.

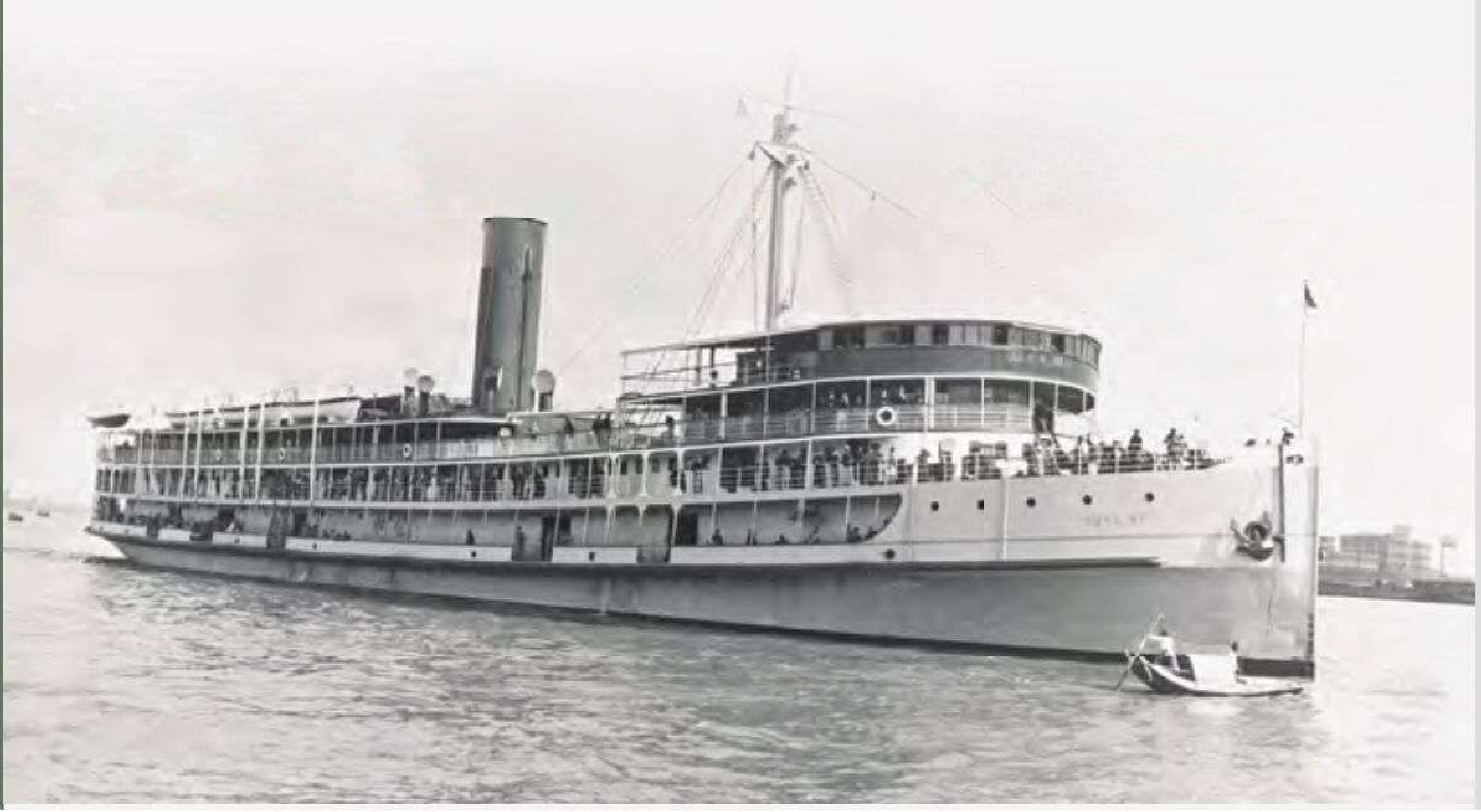
Bolstered by some regular RN ratings from the sunken HMS *Repulse* and HMS *Prince of Wales*, HMS *Li Wo* was ordered to withdraw to Batavia (now Jakarta) in the Dutch East Indies, and sailed from Singapore on February 13, 1942, two days before the city surrendered.

Harried all the while by Japanese flyers, HMS *Li Wo* was attacked four times in 12 hours and then, on February 14, ran straight into a Japanese convoy heading for Sumatra. It was accompanied by an escort of one aircraft carrier, two cruisers, and a number of destroyers. Convinced that these were reinforcements that would seal the fate of Singapore, Wilkinson decided to attack even though it meant almost certain death.

The little passenger steamer with its single 4-inch gun (and only 13 shells) and two Lewis machine guns made full steam towards the lead troopship, firing as it went. Taking the Japanese by surprise, *Li Wo* scored a number of direct hits and then, their shells spent turned to ram a second transport, crashing into the troopship's hull, and firing its Lewis guns at point-blank as the two ships drifted in a death grip. The Japanese began to abandon ship and as the battered *Li Wo* pulled away, the cruiser *Yura* opened fire, ripping the little steamer open. Eyewitnesses recall Wilkinson standing proudly on the bridge as the ship vanished beneath the water.

The Japanese then set about finishing off *Li Wo*'s crew – ramming their lifeboats, firing into the water, and throwing grenades. Only seven survived to become prisoners of war. Wilkinson was awarded a posthumous Victoria Cross, whilst the rest of the crew were honoured with a Distinguished Service Order, a Conspicuous Gallantry Medal, two Distinguished Service Medals, and six Mentions in Despatches.

BELOW SS *Kung Ho* in the 1920s. Like SS *Li Wo*, *Kung Ho* was a Yangtze River steamer operated by the Indo-China Steam Navigation Company, although this is a much older model.
Naval History and Heritage Command



LEFT WT2 Elmer Charles Bigelow, whose citation commends his "heroic spirit of self-sacrifice in the face of almost certain death." Naval History and Heritage Command

BELOW The destroyer USS *Fletcher* (DD-445) manoeuvring off New York on July 18, 1942. National Archives and Records Administration

WATERTENDER FIRST CLASS ELMER CHARLES BIGELOW

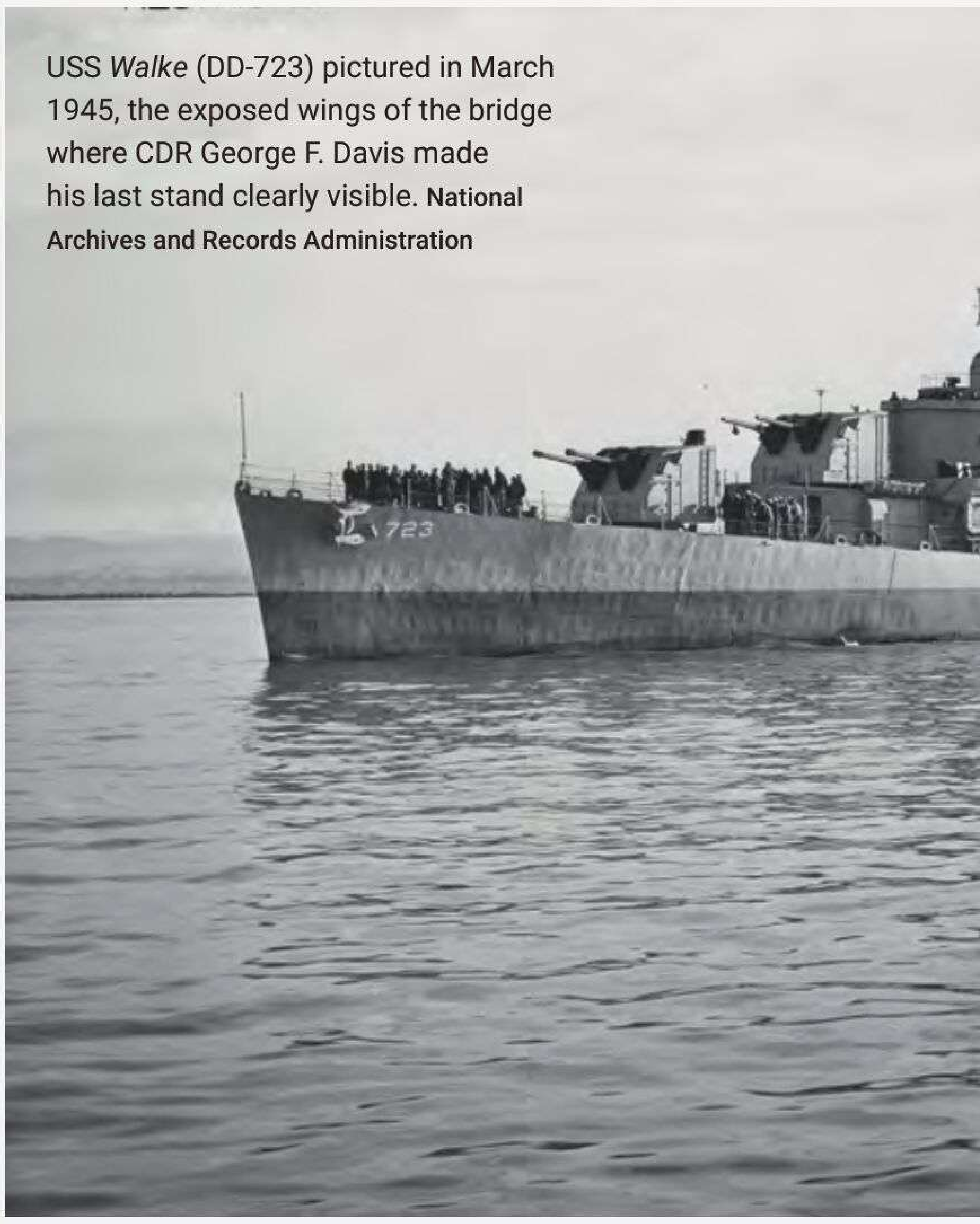
June 15, 1920 - February 15, 1945

US Naval Reserve | Medal of Honor

ILLINOIS NATIVE Charles Bigelow enlisted in the US Naval Reserve in 1942 and progressed from fireman third class to watertender second class (WT2) – a petty officer rank with responsibility for the ship's boiler.

Serving aboard USS *Fletcher* (DD-445) during the landing on Corregidor Island in the Philippines, Bigelow was standing on the deck when a Japanese shell struck the destroyer, penetrating the magazine beneath the No. 1 gun. As the powder cases began to catch light, Bigelow knew that it was a race against time to save lives – and potentially the entire ship. Grabbing two fire extinguishers, he dropped straight down into the thick black smoke of the smouldering magazine, refusing to waste precious seconds by pulling on breathing apparatus.

As every mouthful of the foul smoke brought him closer to death, he doused the flames and cooled the powder cases and bulkheads. He passed away the following day and was posthumously promoted to watertender first class and awarded the Medal of Honor.



USS *Walke* (DD-723) pictured in March 1945, the exposed wings of the bridge where CDR George F. Davis made his last stand clearly visible. National Archives and Records Administration

COMMANDER GEORGE FLEMING DAVIS

March 23, 1911 – January 6, 1945

US Navy | Medal of Honor; Silver Star; Legion of Merit

BORN IN the Philippines to American parents, Davis earned his place in glory assuring the island's recovery. Surviving the sinking of USS *Oklahoma* (BB-37) at Pearl Harbor, Lt. Davis was transferred to the light cruiser USS *Honolulu* (CL-48) for action in the Aleutian Islands, Guadalcanal, the Solomon Islands, and Guam.

This experience resulted in him being raised to commander and transferred to the freshly launched USS *Walke* (DD-723) to provide fire support and minesweeping for infantry landings in the Philippines.

During the action in Ormoc Bay on December 7, 1944, Davis ordered *Walke* to the site of the stricken destroyer USS *Mahan* (DD-364), which had been hit by three kamikaze attacks. Despite the risk of *Mahan*'s ammunition detonating and adding a second destroyer to the Japanese tally, all but six of the ship's crew were rescued.

ABOVE The air filled with anti-aircraft fire from ships of the US Navy task force in Lingayen Gulf, January 10, 1945. Naval History and Heritage Command

ABOVE CDR George F. Davis whose actions during the retaking of the Philippines are marked by the Medal of Honor and Silver Star. **Naval History and Heritage Command**

On January 6, 1945, in Lingayen Gulf, four Japanese fighters were spotted flying low overland towards the isolated *Walke*. Davis rushed from the safety of the bridge to the exposed wing from where he was able to direct anti-aircraft fire. The first two attackers were shot down and crashed into the water, but the third struck the aft of the bridge, drenching Davis in fuel and flame.

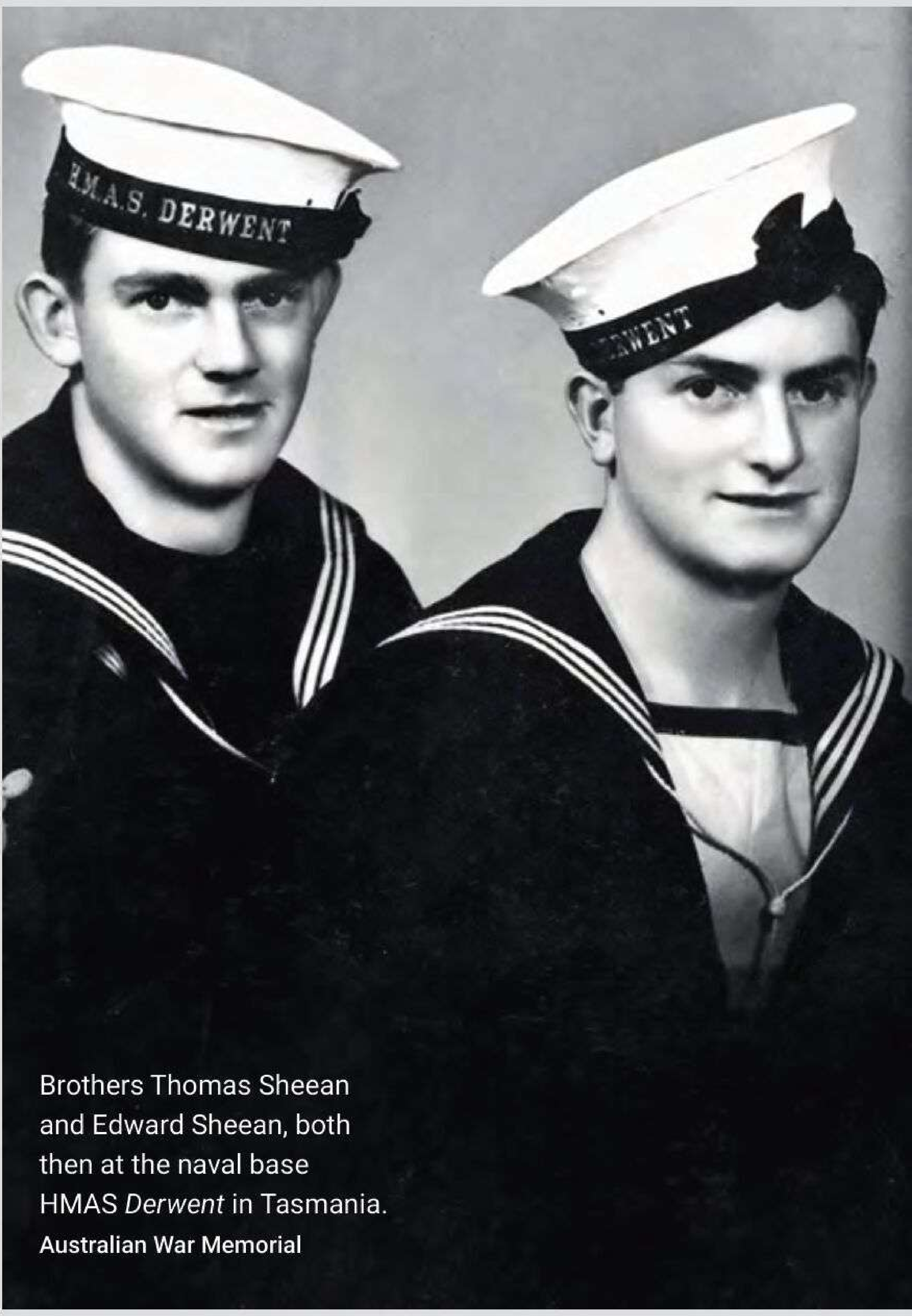
The bridge crew rushed to extinguish their commander, but he refused to be carried below decks until he had seen the fourth plane had been shot down and the fire brought under control. Davis died of his wounds a few hours later and was buried at sea.

He was posthumously awarded the Medal of Honor for his "unhesitating self-sacrifice", the Silver Star for the rescue of USS *Mahan*'s crew, and Legion of Merit for his service aboard USS *Honolulu*.

ORDINARY SEAMAN EDWARD SHEEAN

December 28, 1923 - December 1, 1942

Royal Australian Naval Reserve | Victoria Cross for Australia



Brothers Thomas Sheean and Edward Sheean, both then at the naval base HMAS *Derwent* in Tasmania. **Australian War Memorial**

SERVING AS an anti-aircraft gun loader aboard HMAS *Armidale*, Sheean took part in the desperate evacuation of Dutch and Portuguese civilians and soldiers from Timor as the Empire of Japan rolled over the European colonies of Southeast Asia.

Spotted by Japanese reconnaissance planes shortly after leaving Darwin for the Timor Sea on November 29, 1942, the ship was on borrowed time. On December 1, *Armidale* came under attack from 13 Japanese aircraft, holding them off for over an hour until it was struck by two torpedoes. The corvette began to list dangerously in the water and order was given to abandon ship.

After helping to release a lifeboat, the 18-year old Sheean raced back to his Oerlikon 20mm anti-aircraft gun. Despite being shot in the chest and back, he strapped himself to the gun and kept up fire on the attackers. He brought down two enemy planes and kept the others away from the lifeboats. Survivors remember him still firing as the ship dropped beneath the surface. Only 49 of the 149 crew survived the attack and six miserable days at sea before they were picked up by HMAS *Kalgoorlie*, but many of them credit Sheean with their lives. In 1999 he became the first and only ordinary seaman to have a Royal Australian Navy vessel named after him, and finally, in 2020 he was awarded a very posthumous Victoria Cross for Australia (an award instituted in 2009 to replace the British Victoria Cross).

HMAS *Armidale* in Port Moresby harbour, New Guinea, September 1942. **Australian War Memorial**

LIEUTENANT COMMANDER RUFUS GEDDIE HERRING

June 11, 1921 – January 31, 1996

US Naval Reserve | Medal of Honor

ABOVE An official navy portrait of LT Rufus G. Herring. **Naval History and Heritage Command**

ABOVE Secretary of the Navy James Forrestal presents the Medal of Honor to LT Rufus G. Herring on September 5, 1945. The original print has been 'cropped' with a black marker so that Herring's profile could be used in isolation. **Naval History and Heritage Command**

ONE OF 22 naval personnel awarded the Medal of Honor for the Battle of Iwo Jima, Lt. Herring served as commander of LCI(G)-449 – Landing Craft Infantry (Gunboat), a variant of the infantry landing craft designed to provide fire support to landing vessels – in the battles of Kwajalein (January 31 – February 3, 1944), Saipan (June 15 – July 9, 1944), Tinian (July 24 – August 1, 1944), and Guam (July 21 – August 10, 1944).

Whilst covering the actions of an underwater demolition team at Iwo Jima on February 17, 1945, Herring was wounded by the heavy enemy fire from coastal defence guns. Although bleeding heavily, he regained consciousness only for a Japanese mortar to strike the ship's conning station, killing, or wounding the rest of the officers, and flinging Herring to the deck below. Herring fought for untapped reserves of strength and climbed down to the now-vacant helm. Taking the ship back under control, he held his position until relieved. Even then Herring refused to stand down and according to his Medal of Honor citation, propped himself against empty shell cases and continued to rally the shell-shocked crew until the job was done. When Herring's formidable willpower finally gave out, the senior surviving officer – Ensign L. Bedell – took command and saw LCI(G)-449 to safety.

Returned to the US to recover from his wounds, Herring fell in love with his nurse, and they later married. He was retired in 1947 with the rank of lieutenant commander.

ABOVE A small fleet of Landing Craft Infantry (Gunboats) move up to cover underwater demolition teams at Iwo Jima, February 17, 1945. **Naval History and Heritage Command**

LIEUTENANT COMMANDER IAN EDWARD FRASER

December 18, 1920 – September 1, 2008

Royal Naval Reserve | Victoria Cross; Distinguished Service Cross; Legion of Merit

LEADING SEAMAN JAMES JOSEPH MAGENNIS

October 27, 1919 – February 12, 1986

Royal Navy | Victoria Cross

TWO VERY different men who earned their Victoria Cross in the same white-knuckle action. Fraser was the grammar school-educated son of a marine engineer from London who entered the Royal Naval Reserve as a midshipman, whilst Magennis was a working-class Roman Catholic from West Belfast who had enlisted in the Royal Navy in 1935 at the age of 15. However, both had distinguished themselves in the Submarine Service.

Fraser had seen action beneath the Mediterranean aboard HMS *Sahib*, earning the Distinguished Service Cross for his part in the sinking of the German U-boat *U-301* on January 21, 1943. Magennis, meanwhile, had volunteered for dive training and was Mentioned in Despatches for the attack on the German battleship *Tirpitz* in *Operation Source*.

In July 1945 the two men, Fraser as commander, Magennis as diver – plus Sub-Lieutenant William Smith and Engine Room Artificer Alfred Reed – found themselves sealed into the midget submarine, HMS *XE3* 'Sigyn', with a key role to play in *Operation Struggle*. As the Allies set their sights on the recapture of Singapore, *XE3* was tasked with sinking the formidable Japanese cruiser *Takao* that sat like a guardian lion in the dockyard. This would be accomplished by sending out Magennis to attach limpet mines to its hull and then

BELOW The Japanese heavy cruiser Takao, most likely pictured before the war. **Naval History and Heritage Command**

ABOVE LS James Joseph Magennis and Lt Ian Edwards Fraser, CO, and diver aboard midget submarine HMS *XE3* 'Sigyn'.

ABOVE Leading Seaman James Magennis pictured at Buckingham Palace with his mother, sister, and brother for the presentation of his Victoria Cross in December 1945.
HMS *Ganges* Museum, Shotley

dropping the sub's two-ton side charges. As any student of Buddhism knows, guardian lions typically come in pairs and another sub, HMS *XE1*, was similarly set against the cruiser *Myōkō*. On August 1, *XE3* and *XE1* were towed to the Strait of Jahore by an S-class submarine and carefully made their way into Singapore dockyard – a careful journey of 80 miles over 11 hours, nerves jangled by sea mines, no sleep, and a passing troopship.

Fraser sat the submarine on the bottom, directly beneath *Takao*'s hull, while Magennis flooded the dive chamber only to discover that he was unable to open the hatch fully as they were so close to *Takao*'s keel. With nerves of steel, Magennis removed his breathing apparatus and squirmed through the gap, reattaching it once he was free – the first time a navy diver had performed such a feat. The limpet mines would only attach to a perfectly smooth surface and Magennis discovered the hull caked in barnacles and seaweed. He repeated the journey through the narrow gap of the hatch – made narrower by the falling tide – and returned with a piece of rope that he used to brush away the detritus. Magennis finally placed the mines and squeezed back through the narrowing hatch after 45 tension-filled minutes. The falling tide, meanwhile, had created a new problem for Fraser. *XE3* was now all but trapped between the harbour floor and *Takao*'s keel. With no room to manoeuvre, Fraser decided to release the side-charges and then blow the ballast tanks. One of the two side charges, however, had taken on water and refused to release. Taking five minutes to catch his breath, Magennis made another dive to knock it free with a spanner.
By the time they reached safety, the crew had been operating for 52 hours without respite. Unbeknown to them, *XE1* had been unable to locate *Myōkō* in the gloom and had also dropped its charges beneath *Takao*, but unlike the indefatigable Magennis, they hadn't placed their limpet charges. The subsequent explosion ripped a 60ft by 30ft hole in the hull of *Takao*, flooding its compartments, and taking it out of action but Japan's surrender 14 days later made that a moot point.

Magennis and Fraser were both awarded the Victoria Cross, with Magennis being the only man from Northern Ireland to receive one during World War Two. Sub Lt. Smith received the Distinguished Service Order, whilst ERA Reed was awarded the Conspicuous Gallantry Medal.

A pair of US Navy Grumman F6F-3 Hellcats on patrol in 1943.
Public Domain

THE WAR IN THE EASTERN SKIES

1941 - 1945

THE STRENGTH of Japanese air power had been demonstrated with its terror bombing of Chinese Nationalist holdouts during the Second Sino-Japanese War, which began in 1937 with the invasion of Beijing and the port of Tianjin and was absorbed into the larger global conflict as it grew in scope. Despite the valour of Chinese pilots, their mixed fleet of obsolete Soviet-made bi-planes and open-cockpit monoplanes struggled to push back the invaders. With the introduction of the Mitsubishi A6M – known as the Zero – in July 1940, air superiority was firmly in the hands of the Empire of Japan.

At the time of its deployment, the Zero was the most advanced carrier-based fighter in the world. Its low stalling speed of 69mph gave it greater manoeuvrability when it came to ducking and diving around its counterparts, drop tanks gave it up to eight hours of combat flying time, and the multi-pane cockpit had a full 360-degree view. Unable to rival the horsepower generated by Merlin engines, the Zero's designers lightened the load to increase its speed. Holes were drilled into the frame, which was clad in the lightest gauge aluminium sheet available, and 'luxuries' such as radios were dropped. But as long as nobody could match their turning circle, what was the risk?

Despite the value of its territories in India and Southeast Asia, Britain had committed only a small number of RAF units to defend the theatre from Japanese expansion. At the outbreak of war, the Indian Air Force was in its infancy with only one squadron, the Royal New Zealand Air Force was little more than a training corps for the RAF, and the Royal Australian Air Force had large numbers of its experienced pilots already committed to service in Europe and North Africa. With the coveted Supermarine Spitfires and Hawker Hurricanes desperately needed for the war with Germany, the Commonwealth flyers were reinforced with planes deemed surplus: Bristol Blenheim I and IV light bombers, the US-made Lockheed Hudson medium bombers, and the disastrously slow Brewster F2A Buffalo fighter.

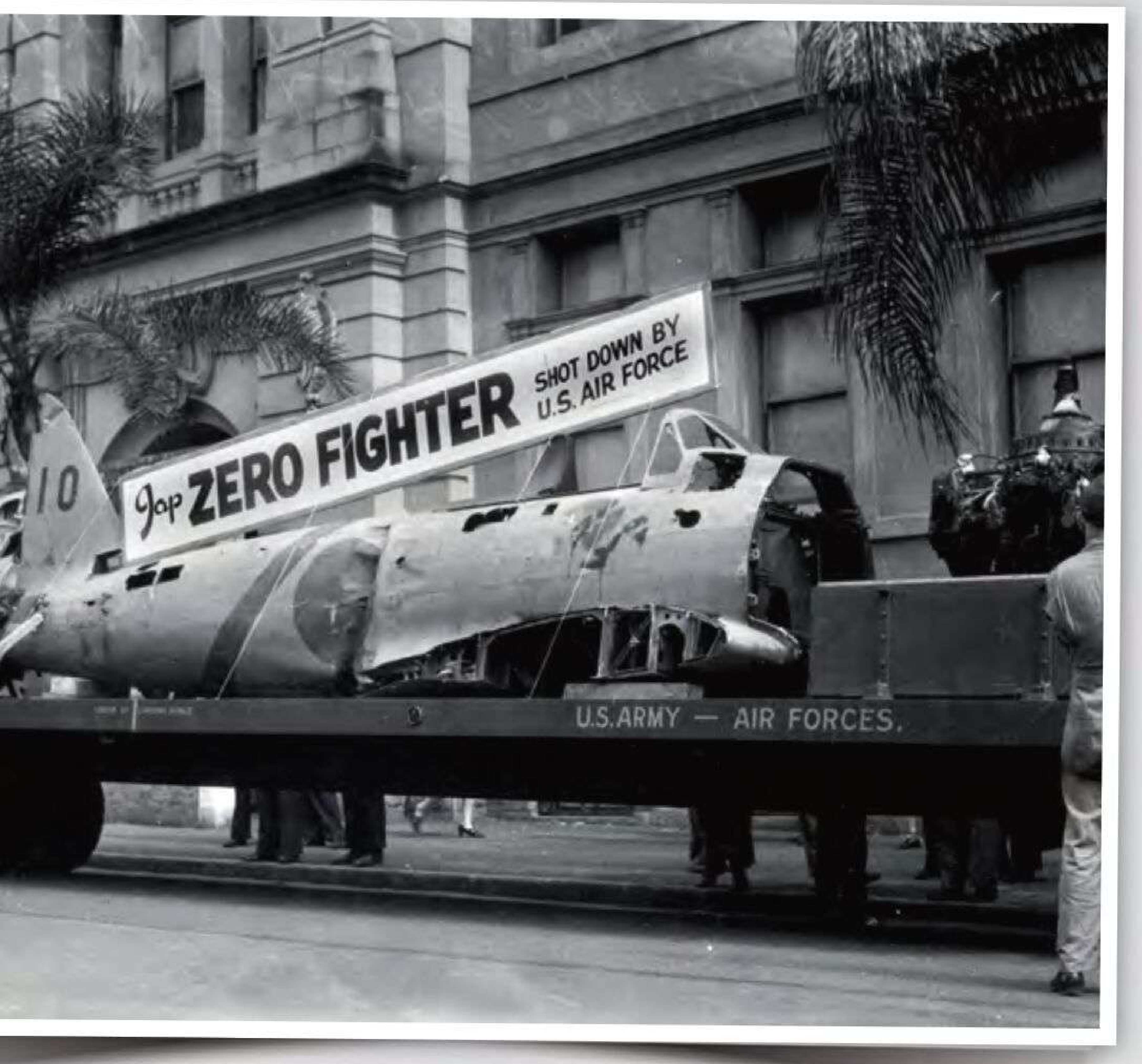
Europe's cast-offs were no match for the Zero, or even its predecessor, the Nakajima Ki-43 'Oscar'. Nor were a smaller number of green pilots a match for Japanese aviators who had, in many cases, been at war in China from as early as 1937.

On the day of Pearl Harbor, Japanese forces launched simultaneous attacks on British-held Hong Kong, Singapore and Malaya, the US-held Philippines, and neutral Siam (now Thailand), destroying huge numbers of Allied planes on the ground. Outnumbered and outgunned, the surviving Commonwealth airmen withdrew from Singapore before its inglorious surrender on February 15, 1942.

The attack on the Philippines on December 8, 1941, proved as catastrophic for the United States Army Air Forces as the fall of Singapore had been for the Commonwealth. Although the hardwearing Curtiss P-40 Warhawk was better suited to aerial duels with the Zero, poor communication and panic saw half of the defenders' air capability destroyed in 45 minutes of coordinated strikes against US airfields. Numbers dwindled further and by December 20, the 14 surviving B-17 Flying Fortresses withdrew to Australia.

From early 1942, the RAF, RAAF and RNZAF acquired large numbers of later model P-40s (Mohawks and Kittyhawks) from the United States, whilst the RAF and IAF were additionally reinforced with Hawker Hurricanes and in 1943, the long-awaited Supermarine Spitfire. Finally, they had a fighting chance. Pilots honed tactics to neutralise the Zero's manoeuvrability, exploiting instead the fragility of its design and the greater speed and operational ceiling of the P-40 and Spitfire. They perfected dropping down on them from high altitude, firing a quick burst of gunfire, and then climbing steeply away, avoiding traditional dogfights where the Zero had an edge. The arrival of US Navy carriers in the theatre brought with them squadrons of Grumman F6F Hellcats and Vought F4U Corsairs, which were also used by the Royal Navy's Fleet Air Arm to similar effect.

By 1943, Allied aircraft design was hot on the Zero's brittle aluminium tail, and by 1944 its technological advantages had been almost entirely lost. In the war of economies, the odds were stacked against Japan – unable to match US manufacturing and development, they had planned instead for a short, but brutal conflict. No thought was given to the Zero's successor, and when the need for one arrived, they lacked the workforce, expertise, and materiel to produce it. Instead, Zeros were turned into flying bombs, hurled at the decks of Allied carriers in terrifying Kamikaze strikes.



ABOVE The wreckage of a Japanese Mitsubishi A6M2, better known as a 'Zero', shot down by the United States Army Air Forces is taken on a tour of Brisbane, Australia, July 1943. State Library of Queensland

ABOVE Flight Lieutenant William Ellis Newton, known to his squadron as 'Firebug'. Australian War Memorial

FLIGHT LIEUTENANT WILLIAM ELLIS NEWTON

June 8, 1919 - March 29, 1943

Royal Australian Air Force | Victoria Cross

THE ONLY pilot with the RAAF to be awarded the VC in World War Two (although not the only Australian airman to earn one), Flt Lt Newton joined 22 Squadron RAAF flying the newly arrived, US-made Douglas A-20 Boston.

In November 1942, 22 Squadron was posted to Port Moresby, capital of the Australian protectorate of New Guinea (now Papua New Guinea), to face the Japanese advance. He took part in the triumphant Battle of the Bismarck Sea (March 2–4, 1943), which left Japan unable to reinforce its invasion force on New Guinea. His daredevil tactic of diving straight at enemy ships, making no effort to evade their fire, and leaving them aflame earned him the nickname 'Firebug'.

During a sortie over the island's sharp mountainous spine to strike the Japanese forces in the north of New Guinea, Newton dropped his bombs in the face of fierce opposition – even returning for a strafing run on the target – before limping home with 98 bullet holes. The fuselage and wing sections were torn, petrol tanks pierced, main-planes and engines seriously damaged, and one of the main tyres flat, but Newton landed safely.

Two days later, on March 18, 1943, a second attack wasn't so lucky. Determined to keep from falling into enemy hands, Newton ditched his burning bomber into the sea. Though their navigator was killed in the crash, Newton and his wireless operator swam ashore and tried to make it back to Australian lines. It wasn't to be, and they were captured by a Japanese patrol.

Flight Sergeant John Lyon was bayoneted to death and a few days later, Newman was ceremonially beheaded with a Samurai sword. A Japanese soldier who saw the murders, wrote in his diary that Newton was "unshaken to the last."

He was awarded the Victoria Cross on October 19, 1943 for his "many examples of conspicuous bravery."

SQUADRON LEADER ARTHUR STEWART KING SCARF

June 14, 1913 – December 9, 1941

Royal Air Force | Victoria Cross

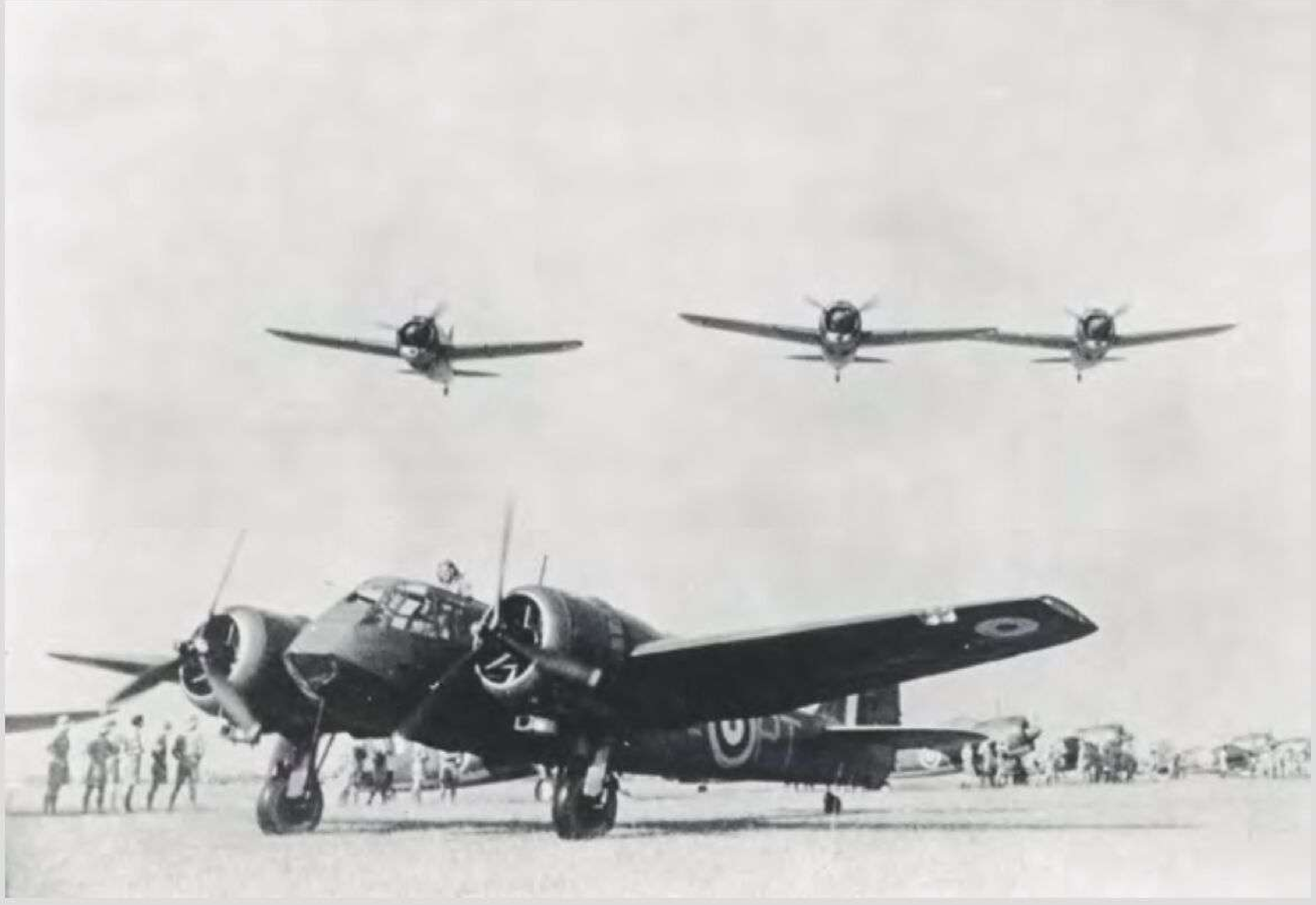
ABOVE Sqn Ldr Arthur Stewart King Scarf was one of the only pilots of 62 Squadron that got airborne during the Japanese attack of December 9, 1941. He pressed ahead with his raid on the Imperial Japanese Army regardless. Public Domain

A PRE-WAR regular, 'Pongo' Scarf was posted to northern Malaya (now Malaysia) with 62 Squadron RAF, his pregnant wife, Sally, had been stationed in the country as a nurse.

With Japan's sudden entry into the war, on December 9, 1941 all available aircraft were ordered to mount a dangerous and desperate daylight raid on Songkhla, Thailand, from where the Imperial Japanese Army was invading. Scarf, as squadron leader, was first in the air in his Bristol Blenheim, when Japanese fighters attacked suddenly, destroying, or disabling the rest of 62 Squadron on the runway.

Through heavy enemy interference, Scarf decided to fly on alone despite knowing that his efforts would make little difference to the Japanese forces poised to overrun Malaya. After delivering his bombs, Scarf fought a running battle as he returned towards British lines but due to bullet wounds to his left arm and chest was forced to land at Alor Setar, successfully touching down without injuring his two crew.

Scarf died in hospital two days later, despite the best efforts of the staff who remained, and due to the chaos of Malaya's fall, his Victoria Cross wasn't awarded until 1946 when the events of the day finally became clear.



ABOVE Bristol Blenheims of Squadron Leader Arthur Scarf's 62 Squadron RAF on an airfield in Malaya prior to the Japanese invasion. Most of these were later destroyed on the ground.

COMMANDER DAVID MCCAMPBELL

January 16, 1910 - June 30, 1996

US Navy | Medal of Honor; Navy Cross; Silver Star; Legion of Merit; Distinguished Flying Cross; Air Medal

THE US Navy's highest-scoring air ace with a confirmed 34 kills and the highest-scoring US air ace to survive the war, McCampbell – who had been a naval aviator since 1938 – also holds the record for the highest tally in a single action.

After serving as a landing signals officer aboard USS *Ranger* and then an instructor in the same, finally in Spring 1944 McCampbell – now commander – was given a posting that allowed him back into the cockpit as CO of Carrier Air Group Fifteen. Later called the 'Fabled Fifteen' for destroying more enemy planes and ships than any other air group in the Pacific, they flew

ABOVE Fighter contrails of the 'Great Marianas Turkey Shoot' seen from the deck of the cruiser USS *Birmingham*, June 19, 1944. Naval History and Heritage Command

WING COMMANDER KARUN KRISHNA MAJUMDAR

September 6, 1913 – February 17, 1945

Indian Air Force | Distinguished Flying Cross & Bar

THE FIRST Indian Air Force pilot awarded the Distinguished Flying Cross – not once, but twice – and first Indian promoted to wing commander. Karun Krishna Majumdar joined the new IAF, then an auxiliary arm of the RAF, in 1932 and trained at RAF College Cranwell in Lincolnshire. Returning home to take his place in 1 Squadron IAF, his comrades nicknamed him 'Jumbo' due to his 6ft stature and personality to match.

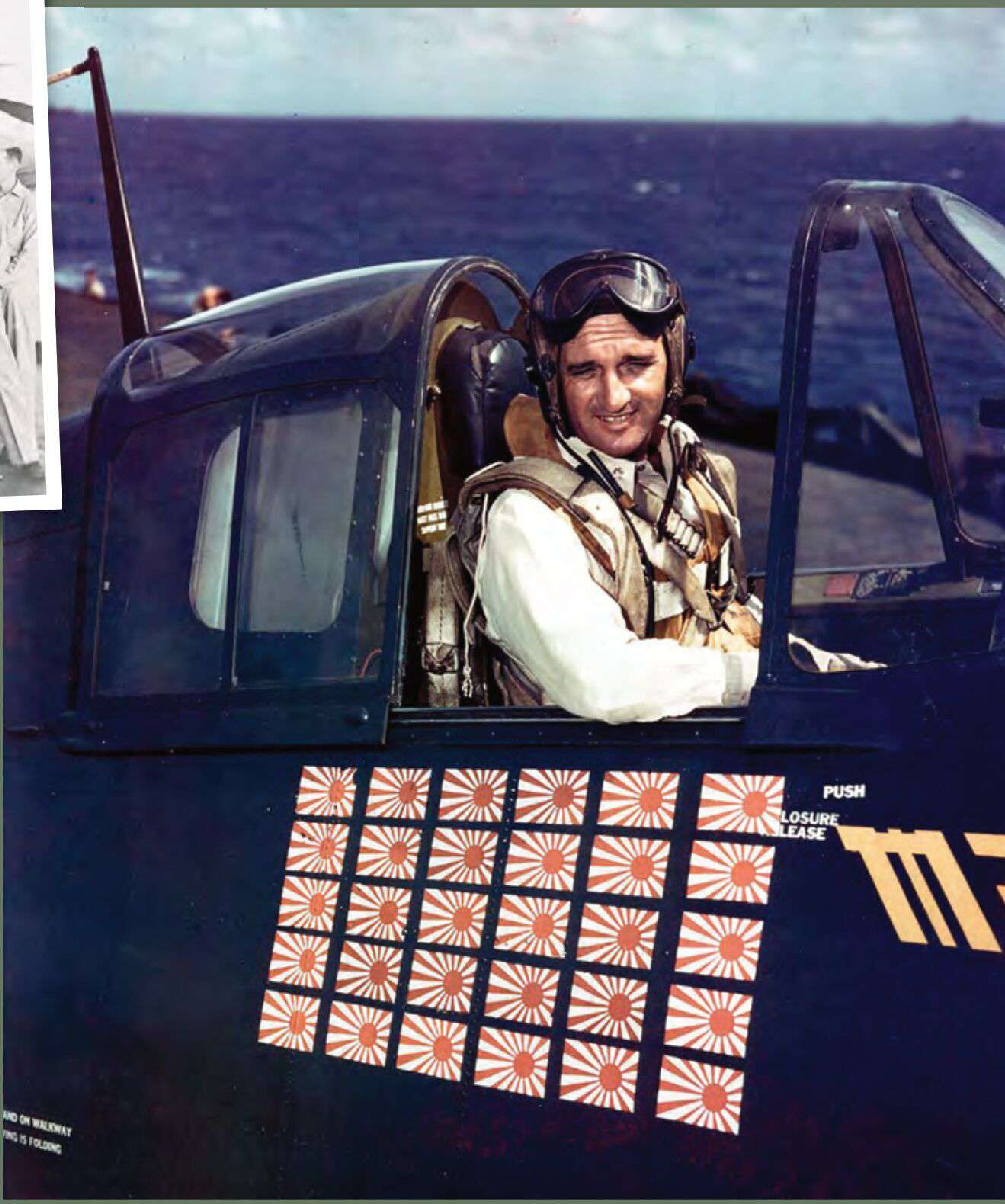
Following the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor and raids on Malaya, No.1 Squadron - with Jumbo as squadron leader – was moved to Toungoo airfield, Burma (now Myanmar). On February 2, 1942 – the day after their arrival – the Japanese Air Force struck.

ABOVE The 'Fabled Fifteen' pose aboard USS *Essex* on December 1, 1944 with their scorecard totalling some 310 Japanese aircraft. CDR McCampbell stands to the right of the scorecard, whilst his fighter, *Minsi III* is in the background. **Naval History and Heritage Command**

the versatile F6F Hellcat and McCampbell personally led them against Japanese patrols from the landing deck of USS *Essex* .

During the Battle of the Philippine Sea (June 19-20, 1944), McCampbell led his fliers against 80 Japanese aircraft, personally shooting down at least seven in a slaughter of desperate attackers remembered as the 'Great Marianas Turkey Shoot'. Later at the titanic Battle of Leyte Gulf (October 23-26, 1944) – the largest naval engagement of the conflict – McCampbell earned his record of nine enemy kills. He was awarded his Medal of Honor by US President Franklin D. Roosevelt personally on January 10, 1945, for "conspicuous gallantry and intrepidity at the risk of his life above and beyond the call of duty as commander."

David McCampbell stayed with the Navy until retiring in 1964.



ABOVE US Navy ace CDR David McCampbell holds the record for enemy shot down in a single sortie. **Naval History and Heritage Command**

The Westland Lysander flown by 1 Squadron was used primarily for artillery spotting and they had been trained for a reconnaissance role – it was no match for the highly manoeuvrable Mitsubishi A6Ms and Nakajima Ki-43s.

Nonetheless, on February 3, Jumbo loaded a modified Lysander with two 250lb bombs and with an escort of two Brewster F2A Buffalos from 28 Squadron RAF, hit the Japanese airfield in neighbouring Thailand. Flying at the level of the treetops to take them by surprise, he dropped his payload on a hanger and destroyed the aircraft inside.

Although it had been designed as a light bomber, the Lysander's lack of bombsights made divebombing the only way of getting its bounty anywhere near the target and Jumbo led the rest of No.1 Squadron on another surprise attack the next day, destroying aircraft and wireless installations. For this operation, he was awarded the DFC and promoted to wing commander.

The second DFC – the bar – was awarded for photographic reconnaissance over Europe in 1944. Tragically, he was killed in a flying accident near Lahore (in what is now Pakistan) on February 17, 1945. A clue to his character was evidenced by a simple line in his diary: "Courage pays greater dividends than timidity."

THE DUKE OF GLOUCESTER WITH SIX INDIAN SQUADRON LEADERS OF THE INDIAN AIR FORCE WHOM HE MET AT AN AERODROME IN INDIA.

ABOVE Six squadron leaders of the Indian Air Force meet with Prince Henry, Duke of Gloucester. On the far left in a turban is Sqn Ldr Mehar 'Baba' Singh and on the far right, then Sqn Ldr Karun Krishna 'Jumbo' Majumdar. **Courtesy of Asad Awan**

WING COMMANDER LESLIE DOUGLAS JACKSON

February 24, 1917 – February 17, 1980

Royal Australian Air Force | Distinguished Flying Cross & Bar

ABOVE Squadron Leader Leslie Douglas Jackson at Port Moresby, September 1942. Australian War Memorial

THE FIRST fighter ace of the campaign over New Guinea and highest-scoring pilot of the Battle of Port Moresby (February 3, 1942 – August 17, 1943), Les Jackson was credited with destroying four Japanese fighters and damaging two bombers.

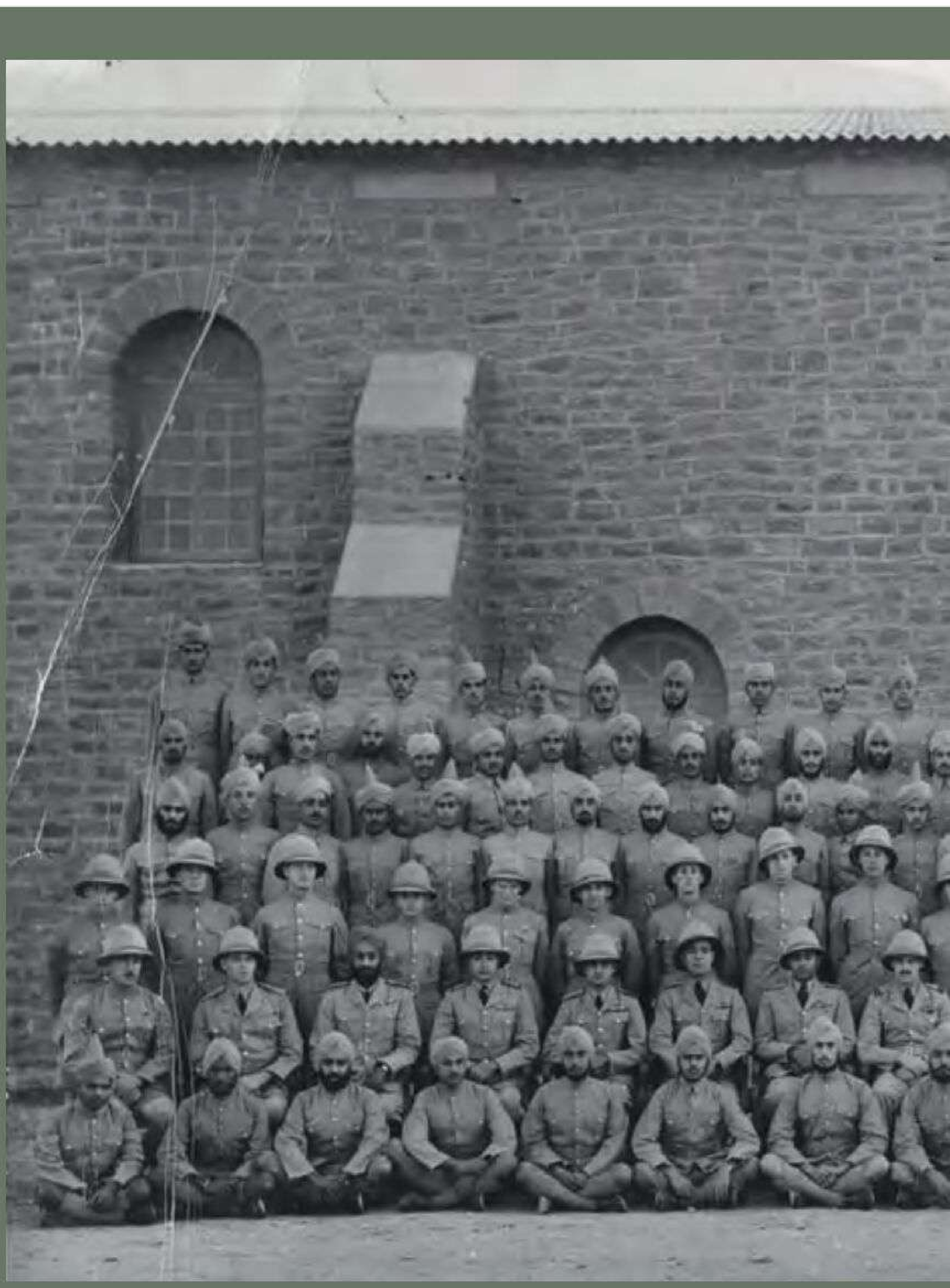
During the campaign, his elder brother and commanding officer, Squadron Leader John Francis Jackson, known as 'Old John ', for his uncommonly advanced age of 34, was shot down and killed intercepting a Japanese strike. On April 30, 1942, the day after Old John's death, Les was appointed CO of 75 Squadron RAAF, flying the P-40 Kittyhawk.

Old John had already earned the family a Distinguished Flying Cross in North Africa, and Les would add another two citations to the family's tally.

The squadron then saw action at the Battle of Milne Bay (August 25, 1942 – September 7, 1942), turning the tables on a misjudged Japanese offensive. His role during this, the first land victory against the Japanese, confirmed Jackson's status as an ace, and his "courage and leadership" was cited as the reason for his DFC. Leaving 75 Squadron in January 1943, Jackson was later promoted to acting wing commander of 78 Wing, charged with supporting infantry operations in Papua, New Britain, and Dutch New Guinea (the western half of the island, now part of Indonesia). He was awarded his bar for "determined and successful attacks on enemy installations and shipping" during this latter campaign.

LEFT The COs of 1 Squadron, 76 Squadron, and 75 Squadron – Wing Commander J. R. Balmer, and Squadron Leaders K. W. Truscott, and Les Jackson at Milne Bay, September 1942. Australian War Memorial

ABOVE Deceptively tranquil: Milne Bay, New Guinea from the air. State Library of New South Wales



ABOVE The pre-war airmen and officers of 1 Squadron IAF, circa 1936. Seated in the second row, third from the left is then Pilot Officer Mehar Singh, and fifth from the right, then-Flying Officer Karun Krishna Majumdar. Courtesy of Asad Awan

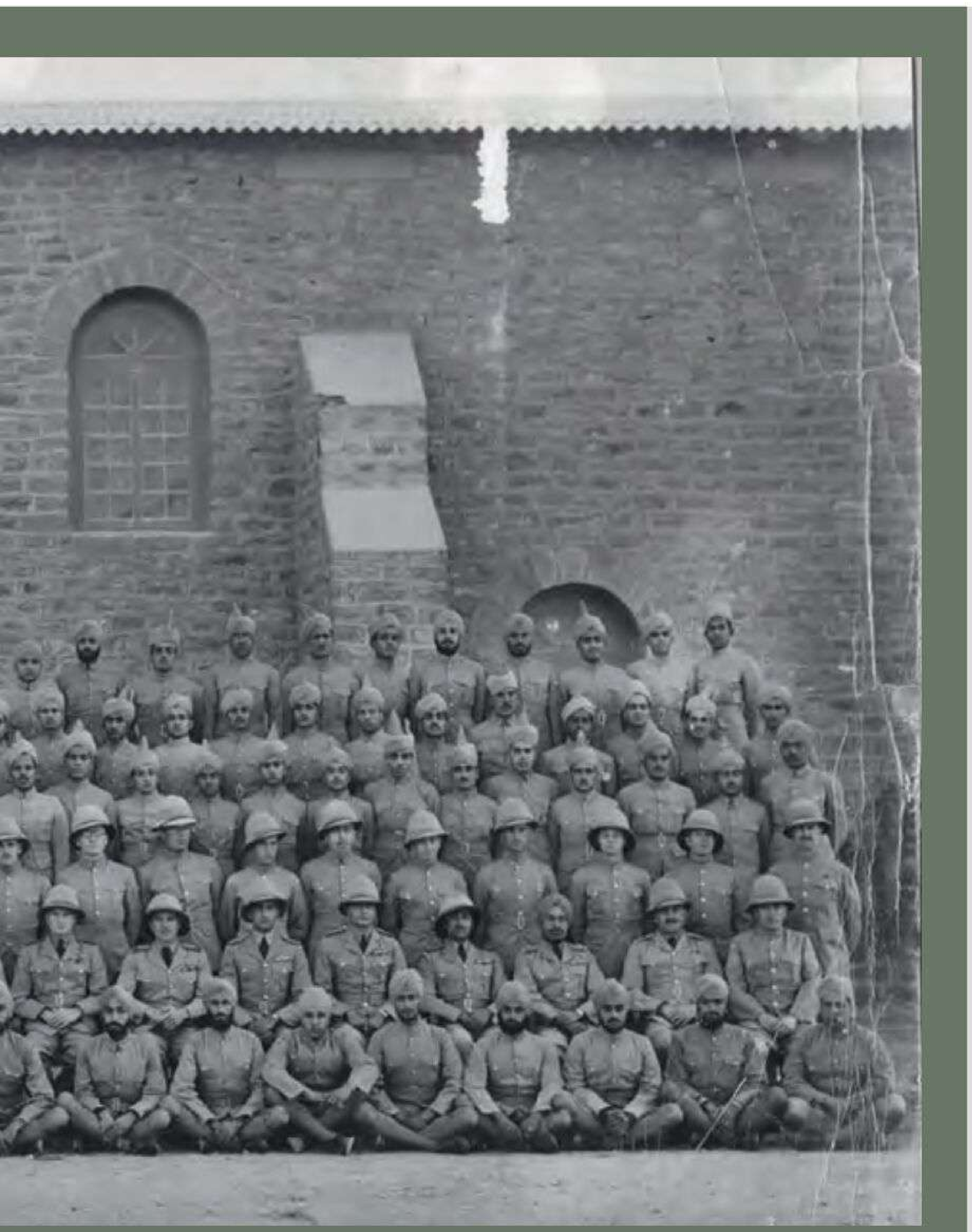
SQUADRON LEADER MEHAR SINGH

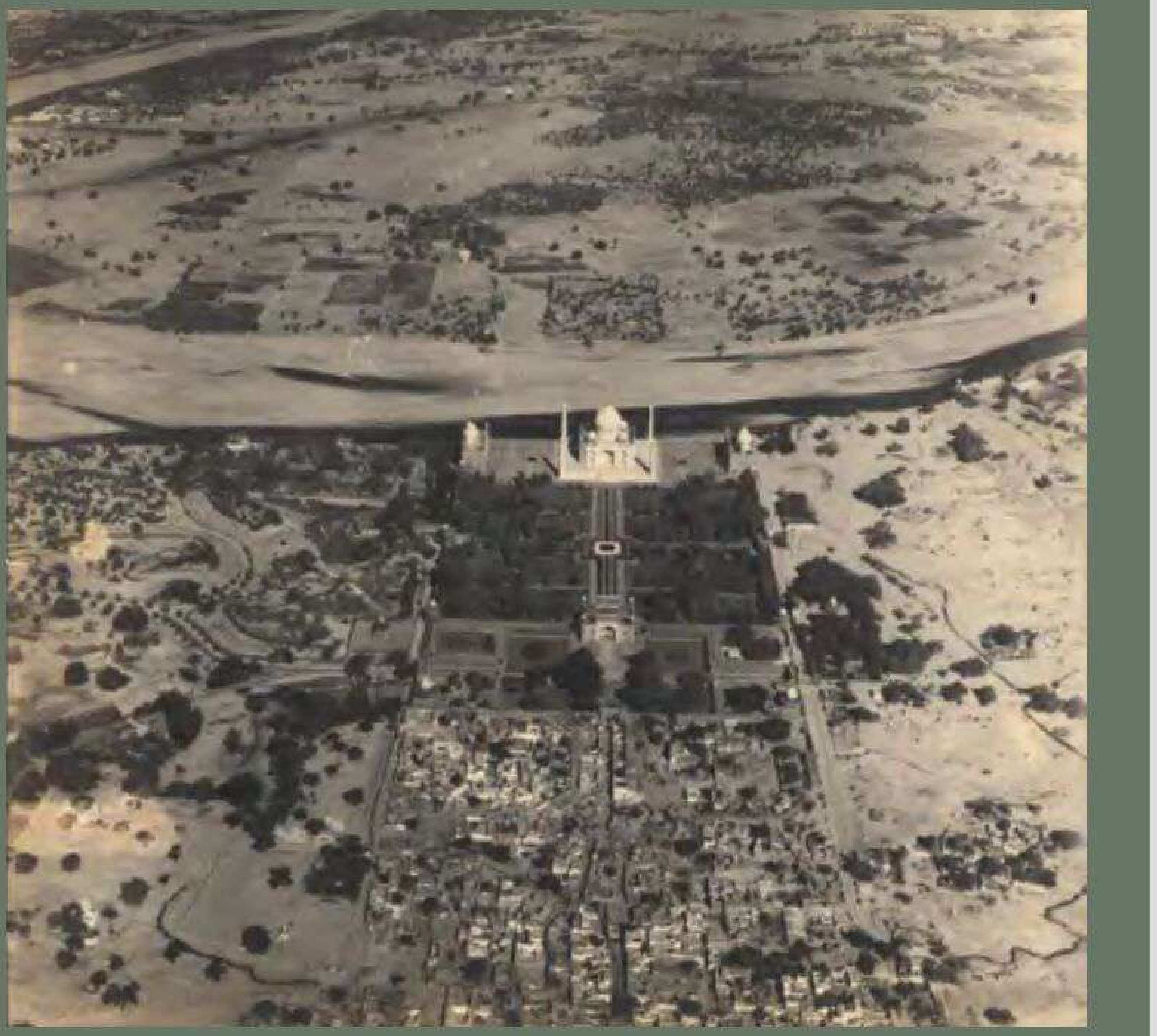
March 20, 1915 – March 11, 1952

Indian Air Force | Distinguished Service Order

THE ONLY IAF flyer awarded the Distinguished Service Order for World War Two, Mehar Singh, known as 'Mehar Baba', was another early recruit to the Indian Air Force. In 1937, Singh's Westland Wapiti was shot down by Pathan tribesmen over the Northwest Frontier. He and his gunner, Ghulam Ali, removed the plane's Lewis gun and made it back to safety in British India despite the best intentions of their pursuers and their lack of maps.

Promoted to squadron leader in command of the newly raised 6 Squadron IAF, a fighter-reconnaissance unit, and flying the Hawker Hurricane IIB and then C, they joined General William Slim's Second Arakan Campaign (December 1942 – May 1943). As the only reconnaissance squadron probing the mist-enshrouded jungle canopy of the Arakan Front, they were dubbed the 'Eyes of the Fourteenth Army', or more unkindly, the 'Suicide Squadron'. Despite his eccentricities – he flew barefoot and drank more whisky than water – Singh was an inspiring commander. Slim, who counted Singh among his friends, recalled: "It is said that if any of his officers made a bad landing, he would take them behind a *basha* [sleeping area] and beat them. Whatever he did, it was effective. They were a happy, efficient and gallant squadron."





ABOVE An incredible aerial photo of the Taj Mahal taken by Sqn Ldr Mehar Singh, flying with 6 Squadron IAF, a specialist reconnaissance squadron. Courtesy of Asad Awan

It's perhaps more likely that Singh's courage, skill, and willingness to put himself in harm's way, instilled confidence in his pilots. When Squadron Leader Shivdev Singh was forced to crash land only two miles from the Japanese, Mehar Baba immediately flew a mechanic to him, landed on the uneven ground, and extracted his comrade and his Hurricane.

His DSO citation paid tribute to his "great skill, courage and determination. He is a most inspiring leader, whose example has been reflected in the fine fighting spirit of the squadron."

Singh remained with the IAF following independence and served in the Indo-Pakistani War of 1947–1948, successfully airlifting Indian Army units from Jammu and Kashmir. He was later promoted to air commodore and awarded the first Maha Vir Chakra, India's second highest military honour.

ABOVE Majors Richard Bong and Thomas B. McGuire, the top-scoring US pilots of the war, compare notes in the Philippines, November 15, 1944. Museum of the United States Air Force

MAJOR THOMAS BUCHANAN MCGUIRE, JR.

August 1, 1920 - January 7, 1945

US Army Air Forces | Medal of Honor; Distinguished Service Cross; Silver Star; Distinguished Flying Cross; Purple Heart; Air Medal

AN AERONAUTICAL engineering student who became the second-highest scoring US air ace, McGuire put his theory into practice when he dropped out to enlist following the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor. He earned his status as an air ace in only two days in the P-38 with the 431st Fighter Squadron, flying top cover for B-25 medium bombers hitting Wewak, the largest Japanese airbase in New Guinea. Set upon by enemy fighters, McGuire shot down three in that first raid and another two the following day, and according to his Medal of Honor citation, "even after his guns jammed, continued the fight by forcing a hostile plane into his wingman's line of fire."

ABOVE The selfless Maj Thomas Buchanan 'Mickey' McGuire, Jr. Air Force Historical Support Division

He was promoted to first lieutenant and promoted again to captain in October 1943 after being shot down over the water and successfully baling out despite a bullet wound in his wrist.

After New Guinea, McGuire covered landings on New Britain, the Philippines and Borneo. In two days over Christmas 1944, McGuire downed seven fighters bringing him within two of Maj Bong. With the authorities worried that he would overshadow Bong, who was about to embark on a publicity tour, McGuire was grounded.

Returning to the skies in January 1945, McGuire was leading a sortie over a Japanese airfield on the Negros Island in the Philippines, when they were ambushed in difficult weather. Whilst attempting to save one of his comrades, he entered a tight turn and overburdened with fuel, his P-38 stalled and crashed. For his "gallant initiative, deep and unselfish concern for the safety of others, and heroic determination to destroy the enemy at all costs," he was awarded a posthumous Medal of Honor.

FLYING OFFICER GEOFFREY BRYSON FISKEN

February 17, 1916 - June 12, 2011

Royal New Zealand Air Force | Distinguished Flying Cross

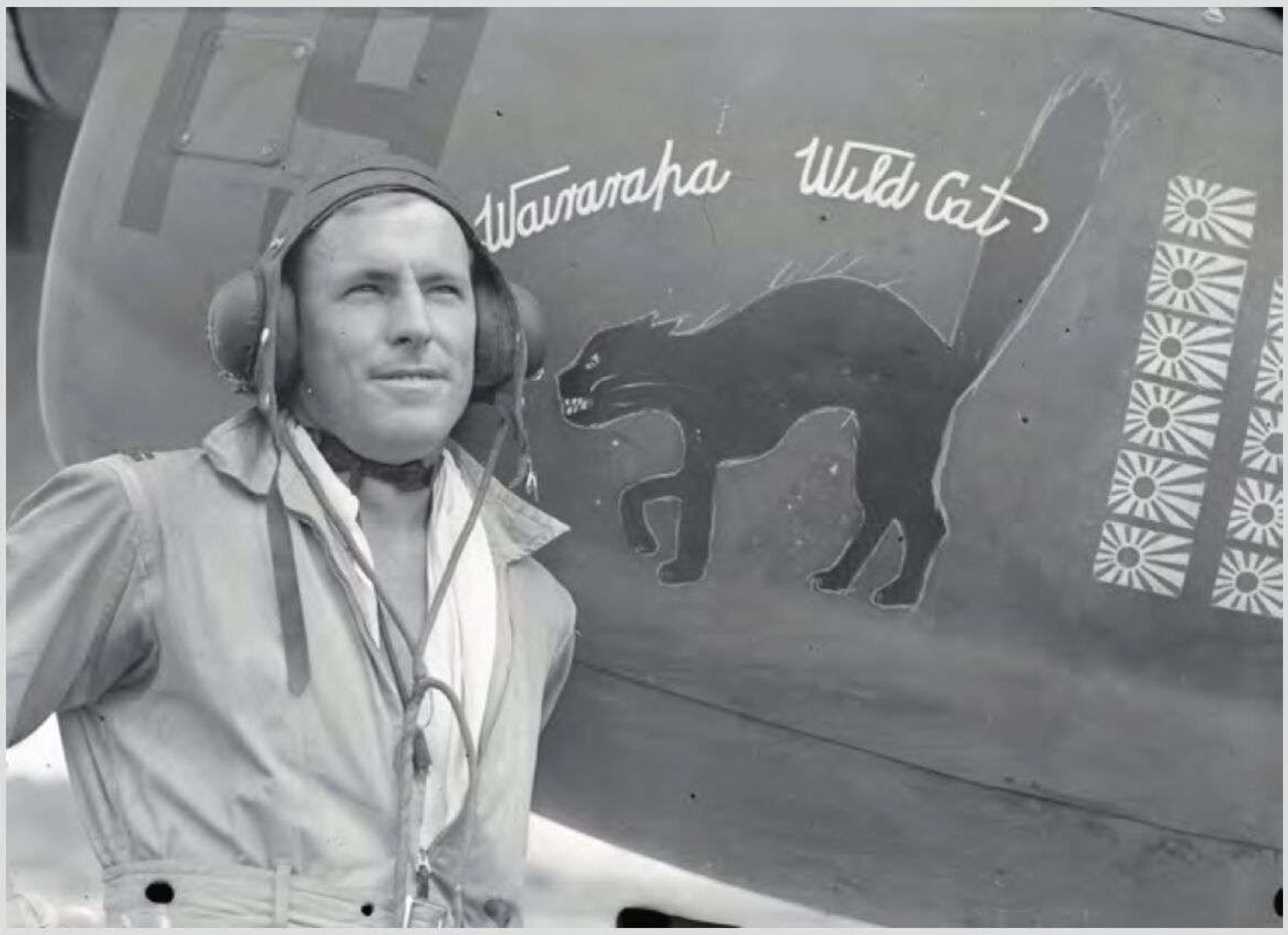
ARGUABLY THE deadliest Commonwealth air ace of the Pacific war, FO Geoffrey Fisken fought in 243 Squadron RAF flying stubby and temperamental Brewster Buffaloes during bloody defeats of the Malayan Campaign (December 8, 1941 – February 15, 1942).

They were powerless to prevent the sinking of HMS *Prince of Wales* and HMS *Repulse* on December 10, 1941 and fought valiantly to hold back the Imperial Japanese Army Air Force over Singapore. Between December 16, 1941 and February 1, 1942, Fisken was confirmed to have downed at least three Mitsubishi A6M Zeros, two Mitsubishi G3M bombers, and one Nakajima Ki-27 Nate, before there were too few Allied aircraft remaining to put up a defence and the surviving airmen were evacuated. During the fierce fighting of February 1, 1942, he was wounded in the arm by a bullet and in the hip by a shell fragment.

ABOVE Fg Off Geoffrey Bryson Fisken's P-40 Kittyhawk, 'Wairarapa Wildcat', taxis on the runway at Guadalcanal, 1943. Air Force Museum of New Zealand

Later commissioned as a pilot officer in 14 Squadron RNZAF flying a P-40 Kittyhawk dubbed 'Wairarapa Wildcat', Fisken flew against the Japanese once more over the Solomon Islands, returning from one mission with 153 bullet holes in the plane's body.

Fisken never fully healed from the wounds taken at Singapore and was medically discharged in December 1943 with a DFC to keep him company. Due to the confusion accompanying the fall of Singapore on February 15, 1942, his exact tally is unknown. His confirmed number of kills is 11 but it could be as high as 13.



ABOVE Flying Officer Geoffrey Bryson Fisken poses by the nose of his aircraft, showing its kill markings. Air Force Museum of New Zealand

ABOVE Pilots of 14 Squadron RNZAF gather for a photograph on Guadalcanal, June, or July 1943. Fg Off Fisken is fourth from the right in the back row. Air Force Museum of New Zealand

ABOVE Airmen and ground crew of 14 Squadron RNZAF pose with their fleet, 1943. Air Force Museum of New Zealand

ABOVE Maj Richard Ira Bong in the uniform of the US Army Air Forces. Air Force Historical Support Division

MAJOR RICHARD IRA BONG

September 24, 1920 - August 6, 1945

US Army Air Forces | Medal of Honor; Air Medal; Distinguished Service Cross; Silver Star

ABOVE Gen Douglas MacArthur presents the Medal of Honor to Maj Richard Ira Bong in December 1943. Museum of the United States Air Force

MAJOR RICHARD Ira Bong was the US 'Ace of Aces', credited with shooting down 40 enemy aircraft from his twin-engine Lockheed P-38 Lightning. Lt Bong was posted to New Guinea with the 9th Fighter Squadron and on December 27, 1942 claimed his first two kills in the Battle of Buna-Gona (November 16, 1942 – January 22, 1943), earning him the Silver Star, and by the end of the campaign, he had been awarded the Distinguished Service Cross.

Bong credited his white-knuckle technique of getting as close to the enemy as possible and firing at point-blank for his kill ratio and demonstrated it in a widely reported incident where he dropped to a glide over a lake in order to shoot a crocodile pursuing a dinghy. Bong fought at the Battle of the Bismarck Sea (March 2-4, 1943) and flew in the Philippines, with a promotion to captain and a Distinguished Service Cross.

Bong was awarded the Medal of Honor by General Douglas MacArthur in December 1944 and in January 1945 returned to the US on a publicity tour for war bonds. An introvert socially, Bong preferred to let his flying do the talking and pushed his luck, accepting the role of test pilot at Lockheed in California. He was killed during a test flight of the P-80 Shooting Star jet fighter on August 6, 1945 – the news sharing space with the dropping of the atomic bomb on Hiroshima.

WARRANT OFFICER LEONARD VICTOR WATERS

June 20, 1924 - August 24, 1993

Royal Australian Air Force | None

ABOVE Then an aircrewman, Warrant Officer Leonard Victor Waters, the first indigenous Australian fighter pilot, poses in his winter flying kit, 1943. Australian War Memorial

THE LEAST prestigious individual on this list if measured in ribbon alone, Len Waters is deserving of recognition for his hard fight not just against the Empire of Japan, but against a society fundamentally structured to hold him back. A sheep shearer who left school at 13, Waters enlisted in 1942 and initially trained as a flight mechanic before applying for pilot training. Studying hard to overcome his lack of formal education, Waters – a Kamilaroi (Gamilaraay) man – graduated fourth in his class of 48 to become the first indigenous combat pilot in the RAAF. Prior to the war, service had been restricted to 'Europeans' only, but the sudden need for manpower saw the rules relaxed and the air force, which had sent many pilots to fight in Britain and North Africa prior to Pearl Harbor, felt the shortfall harder than most. In 1944 he was posted to 78 Squadron in Dutch New Guinea, and then Borneo. On one flight his Kittyhawk – named 'Black Magic' by a previous pilot, which tickled Waters, so he kept it – was struck by a 37mm shell which wedged itself in the cockpit, next to a fuel tank, without detonating. Waters flew for another two hours with what he described as "a gun to his head" before landing safely. He later wrote: "It's the smoothest landing I've ever made. I guarantee I could land it on eggs because I didn't want to jar out what was there."

After his discharge, Waters discovered the structural racism that he had escaped in uniform was waiting for him the second he took it off. He tried and failed to secure funding for a regional Queensland airline and spent the majority of his life as he had before – shearing.

BLACK MAGIC

ABOVE WO Len Waters' P40 N-15 Kittyhawk, named 'Black Magic' by a previous flyer. Australian War Memorial

D-Day, the Allied invasion of Nazi-occupied Western Europe on June 6, 1944, was a turning point in World War Two. American, British, Canadian, and Free French forces stormed ashore on five beaches, code named Gold, Sword, Juno, Utah, and Omaha, in Normandy, while the airborne phase of the operation included three divisions.

The D-Day invasion initiated the liberation of Western Europe, which had been under Nazi occupation for four years. Up to that time, the invasion, code named *Operation Overlord*, was the largest land-sea-air offensive of its kind in history, involving more than 150,000 troops, nearly 7,000 landing craft, warships and support vessels, and thousands of aircraft.

The precursor to the Normandy Campaign, D-Day established the Allied lodgement in France that staged offensive operations leading to the surrender of Germany 11 months later in May 1945. However, victory was not certain. The invasion was fraught with risk, and Allied Supreme Commander General Dwight D. Eisenhower had even anticipated the content of a communiqué should the great endeavour lead to defeat.

He scrawled the following message on a scrap of paper: "Our landings in the Cherbourg-Havre area have failed to gain a satisfactory foothold and I have withdrawn the troops. My decision to attack at this time and place was based upon the best information available. The troops, the air and the Navy did all that bravery and devotion to duty could do. If any blame or fault attaches to the attempt it is mine alone."

The heroism of individual soldiers, on the beaches and beyond, rendered Eisenhower's statement a dead letter. The note was later given to a junior officer as a memento of the occasion. Ordinary soldiers confronted by concentrated machine gun, artillery and rifle fire from fixed enemy fortifications displayed unbelievable bravery as they forced their way off the embattled beaches and moved inland.

The bloody campaigns of 1944-45 followed. Allied troops fought through the bocage, or hedgerow, country of France, battled through the Low Countries, and slashed through the Saar. Along the way, though, there were harrowing battles, triumphs and failures, courage, brutality, suffering, and death. In the summer of 1944, Allied armour broke out of the Normandy beachhead, and following *Operation Cobra* the tanks reached an open plain, dashing across France, liberating Paris, and pushing to the Reich's doorstep. Thousands of German troops were killed or captured in the encirclement at Falaise. But the offensive eventually slowed due to a shortage of fuel as supply lines were stretched to the breaking point.

D-DAY TO VICTORY

1944 - 1945

BELOW American soldiers wade ashore under fire at Omaha Beach on D-Day, June 6, 1944. Public Domain

ABOVE British troops advance through a heavily wooded area of the Reichswald in Germany, February 1945. Public Domain

In *Operation Market Garden*, Eisenhower's only departure from the Allied broad front strategy, a combined airborne and ground assault into the Netherlands to capture vital bridges that would allow a quick strike into the Ruhr, the industrial heart of Germany, came to naught. In the dark confines of the Hürtgen Forest, soldiers fought and died for yards of territory. Battling in the Reichswald, Germany's national forest, Allied troops encountered determined resistance and paid for their gains in blood.

Then came the desperation of the Battle of the Bulge, Adolf Hitler's last desperate gamble for victory in the West. Despite the fact that the Soviet Red Army was advancing steadily in the East, Hitler transferred thousands of soldiers and precious Panther and Tiger tanks to the Western Front. On December 16, 1944, he launched *Operation Wacht am Rhein* (Watch on the Rhine), as artillery thundered, the tanks rolled, and infantry pressed through the Ardennes Forest, catching American troops, thinly spread across the front, completely by surprise.

The Germans drove relentlessly toward the Belgian port of Antwerp, hoping to disrupt Allied supply lines and split the Western armies in two, perhaps even forcing a favourable peace on Britain and the United States. The deep penetration nearly succeeded, but the gutsy stands of pockets of resistance stalled the German drive. Americans troops clung doggedly to the vital Belgian crossroads town of Bastogne, and British General Bernard Montgomery was given temporary command of the US First Army troops on the northern shoulder of the Bulge.

With grit and determination, the Germans were denied their objective. As General George S. Patton, Jr., boasted as his Third Army turned north to relieve the encircled defenders at Bastogne, "This time the Kraut's got his head in a meat grinder, and I've got hold of the handle."

In the spring of 1945, Allied spearheads plunged deep into the German Fatherland, driving the enemy before them, and at times encountering fanatical resistance from the remnants of hardened Nazi Waffen SS formations. By the end of April, Hitler had committed suicide in his Führerbunker, deep beneath the rubble of Berlin, as soldiers of the Red Army stalked the streets of the German capital. In the west, German troops surrendered en masse to General Montgomery's forces in the Netherlands and northern Germany, and to the American armies further south.

World War Two in Europe was over, and the surrender was signed in a schoolhouse in Reims, France, on May 7, 1945. Thousands of heroic Allied soldiers had given their lives for the coming of that day.

ABOVE Colonel General Alfred Jodl, representing the German armed forces, signs surrender documents ending World War Two in Europe in a schoolhouse at Reims, France, on May 7, 1945. Public Domain

MAJOR AUDIE MURPHY

June 20, 1925 –
May 28, 1971

US Army | Medal of Honor; Distinguished Service Cross, Silver Star; Bronze Star; Legion of Merit; Purple Heart; French Legion of Honor; French Croix de Guerre; Belgian Croix de Guerre

ABOVE Audie Murphy became the most highly decorated soldier of World War Two. His Medal of Honor was presented in June, 1945. **Public Domain**

AUDIE MURPHY, a boy from Texas who was not yet 20 years old when World War Two in Europe ended, was the most highly decorated American soldier of the conflict. Murphy was a member of the 15th Regiment, 3rd Infantry Division, Seventh US Army, participating in the fighting in Sicily, Italy, and southern France.

During six weeks of combat after the landings there, the 3rd Infantry Division lost 4,500 soldiers killed, wounded, or missing. In the opening hours of the fighting, Murphy manned a machine gun and killed two German soldiers. When others appeared to exit a nearby farmhouse and surrender, he saw a friend walk over to accept – only to be gunned down in a treacherous act. Murphy then charged the house, killed six Germans, wounded two more, and took 11 prisoners. For this action, he received the Distinguished Service Cross.

Murphy was in the midst of a desperate fight near the French village of Holtzwihr on January 26, 1945. His regiment's forward positions came under determined attacks from 250 German infantrymen supported by six tanks. Murphy led Company B during the fighting, initially ordering his men to fall back to better defensive positions and then turning toward the enemy to assess the situation.

Utilising a field telephone to direct artillery fire against the oncoming Germans, Murphy was alone in his command post. He watched an American tank destroyer take a direct hit from a German shell. The crew baled out of the flaming vehicle, but Murphy seized the moment, mounting the tank destroyer and turning its .50-calibre machine gun on the enemy. He mowed down dozens of Germans, killing at least 50, and was wounded in the leg. His singlehanded defence stalled the enemy attack, and later Murphy rallied his men for a counterattack that drove the Germans back, restoring the line.

A month later, Murphy received a battlefield promotion to second lieutenant. When the war ended, he had been wounded three times and received 28 medals. After the war, he pursued a film career and was tragically killed in a plane crash in 1971.

ABOVE American soldiers gather artillery ammunition in southern France. Audie Murphy fought there and received every US Army medal for valour available during World War Two, 1945. **Public Domain**

PRIVATE BILL MILLIN

July 14, 1922 – August 17, 2010

British Army | Bronze Life-size Statue on Sword Beach, Normandy

THEY HAD landed with precision in the pre-dawn hours of D-Day, and the glider-borne soldiers of the 2nd Battalion, the Ox and Bucks Light Infantry, Sixth Airborne Division, were ordered to hold the vital bridge across the Caen Canal until relieved. But when would their relief appear?

All doubt was removed as to the arrival of their comrades when the skirl of bagpipes was heard in the distance, heralding the arrival of Commandos of the British 1st Special Service Brigade, under Simon Fraser, 15th Lord Lovat. And the heartening music was courtesy of Lovat's personal bagpiper, Private William 'Bill' Millin of the Cameron Highlanders. The D-Day objective was secured.

Although it might have seemed unusual for a bagpiper to be present amid the heavy fighting in the opening hours of *Operation Overlord*, June 6, 1944, Millin was in his element. He came ashore with the Commandos at Sword Beach. Lord Lovat had dismissed an order that had restricted bagpipes to rear areas and told Millin: "Ah, but that's the English War Office. You and I are both Scottish, and that doesn't apply."

When the Commandos splashed ashore, Millin was at Lovat's side, and the commander shouted, "Give us Highland Laddie, man!" The soldier over Lovat's soldier was shot in the face, but the Commandos were undeterred. Millin kept playing as machine gun bullets whipped across the sand and the crunch of mortar shells scattered shrapnel in all directions. On the way to relieve the Ox & Bucks at Pegasus Bridge, Millin kept playing, and as they approached, the strains of Blue Bonnets Over The Border could be heard.

Piper Bill Millin of the Cameron Highlanders plays for Commandos in 1944.

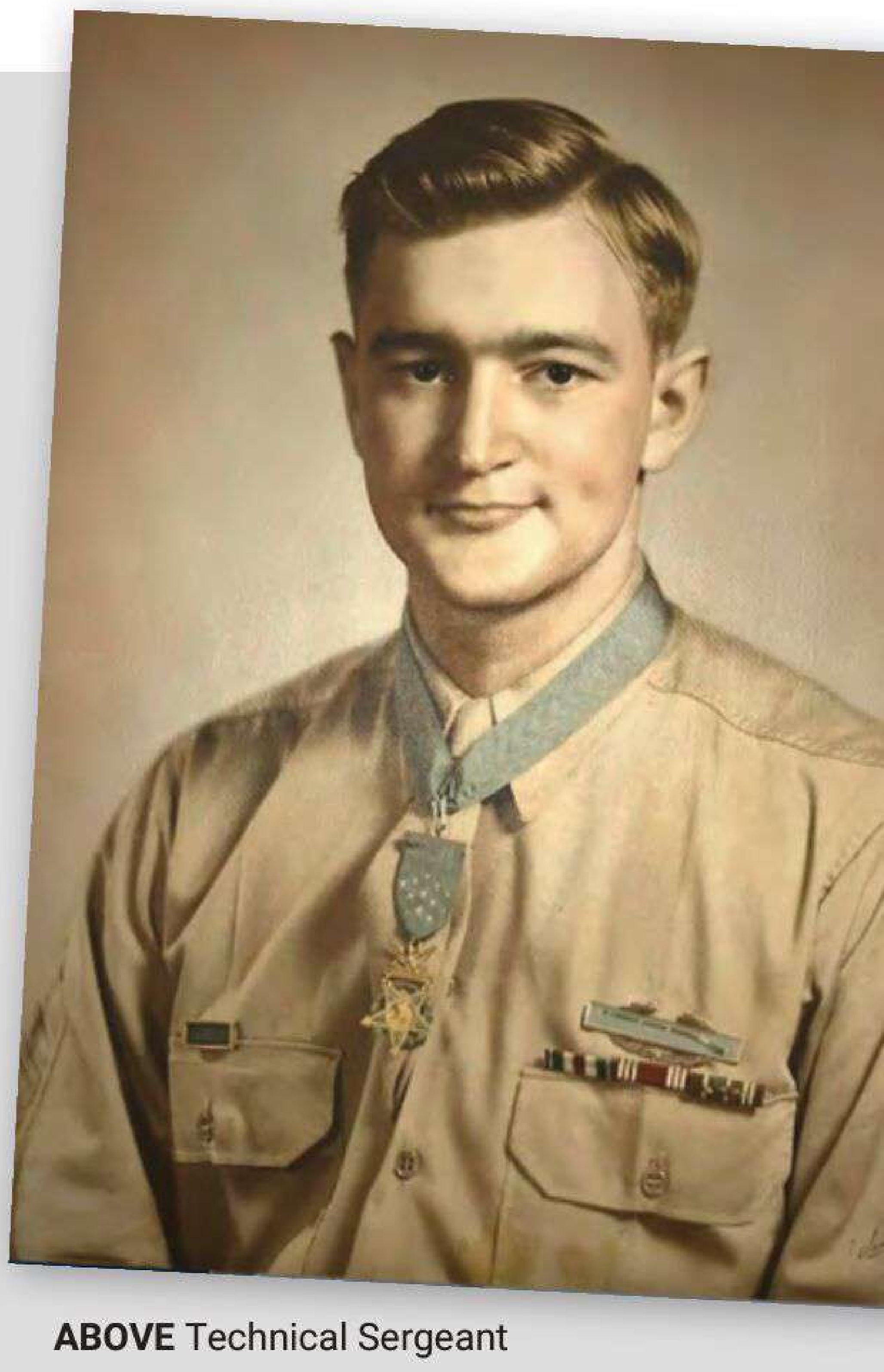
ABOVE Millin landed at Sword Beach on D-Day. Public Domain

Millin remained with the Commandos until their return to England in September. Lovat had been seriously wounded on D-Day, and Millin was later posted to No. 4 Commando, ending the war in Lubeck, Germany. The 'Mad Piper' had turned in an extraordinary performance in Normandy, armed only with his instrument. A set of his bagpipes is now on display at the Memorial Museum of Pegasus Bridge in Ranville, France. A statue of Millin was dedicated on Sword Beach in 2013.

TECHNICAL SERGEANT CHARLES COOLIDGE

August 4, 1921 – April 6, 2021

US Army | Medal of Honor; Silver Star, Bronze Star, French Legion of Honor



ABOVE Technical Sergeant Charles Coolidge received the Medal of Honor for valour in action in the Vosges Mountains of France. Public Domain

THEY WERE just a handful of soldiers, guarding the right flank of the 3rd Battalion, 141st Infantry Regiment, 36th Division of the US Seventh Army in the cold, snow, and freezing rain of the Vosges Mountains.

Aa a pair of German tanks rumbled forward one of the commanders popped out and asked in perfect English: “Do you guys want to give up?” He wasn't expecting the reply: “I'm sorry, Mac. You've got to come and get me.” The curt response came from 23-year-old Technical Sergeant Charles H. Coolidge, a combat veteran who had led the stand of these few soldiers for four miserable days.

Coolidge had already earned a Silver Star in May 1944, leading a machine gun section while supporting a rifle company near Velletri, Italy. Moving within 25 yards of the enemy, the machine gunners killed and wounded many while scooping up prisoners as well.

Now, in late October, he faced another stern test in the rugged French mountains. Years later, Coolidge remembered: “I can still see him doing it” as the German tanker opened his hatch to deliver the cold ultimatum. After declining, Coolidge scrambled for cover. “He turned that 88 right where I'd been standing, and he fired point blank.”

The tank fired four more times, but miraculously Coolidge was uninjured. He picked up a bazooka. It was inoperable. He gathered as many hand grenades as he could carry and ordered his men to fall back. Turning toward the Germans, he tried to buy critical time. Back home in Tennessee, Coolidge was known as an accomplished softball pitcher. That day in the Vosges, he put the skill to work, tossing as many as 70 grenades and killing at least 20 German soldiers. He was the last defender to withdraw from the position. Incredibly, no American life was lost during the ordeal.

Coolidge received his Medal of Honor on June 18, 1945 and remained with his soldiers through the end of World War Two. After the war, he worked in the family printing business. He died in 2021 at age 99.

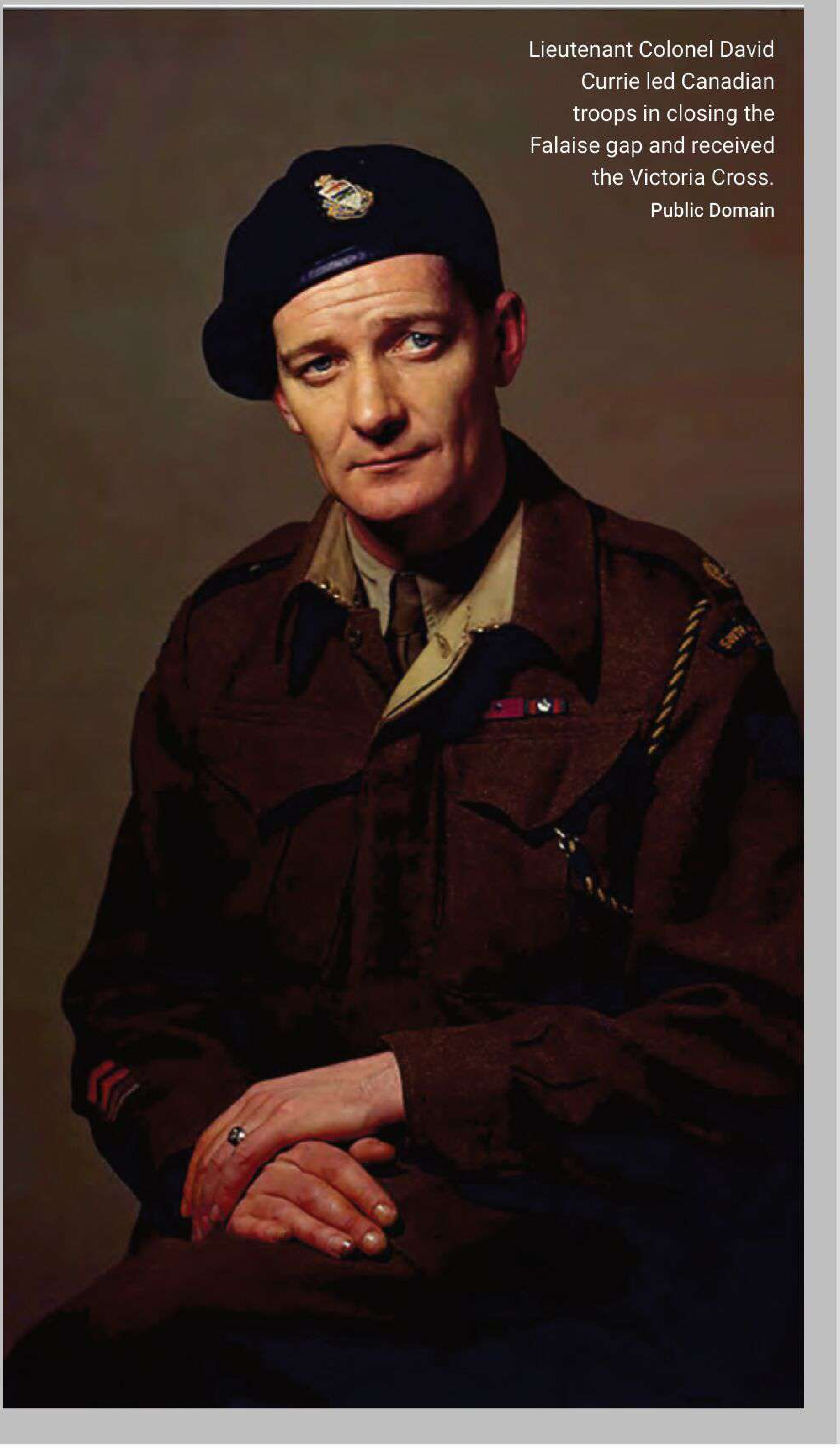
RIGHT General Wade Haislip congratulates Technical Sergeant Charles Coolidge during Medal of Honor ceremonies in Germany on June 18, 1945. Public Domain

ABOVE Major and later Lieutenant Colonel David Currie, left centre, accepts the surrender of German soldiers at St. Lambert-sur-Dives, France, where his leadership earned the Victoria Cross. **Public Domain**

LIEUTENANT COLONEL DAVID CURRIE

July 8, 1912 – June 20, 1986

Canadian Army | Victoria Cross



Lieutenant Colonel David Currie led Canadian troops in closing the Falaise gap and received the Victoria Cross. **Public Domain**

FOR WEEKS after landing in Normandy, the Allied forces had fought stubborn German resistance among the hedgerows. Every country lane was defended, a potential death trap as the enemy placed machine guns and mortars to ravage their advance. At last, however, the breakout from the embattled beachhead allowed Allied tanks to advance rapidly across open country.

In the process, thousands of soldiers of the German Seventh Army were surrounded at Falaise. As the Allied noose closed, the Germans fought desperately to keep any escape route open.

Battering their way forward, troops and tanks of the Canadian Army kept the pressure on. Among these was a task force of armour and infantry of the South Alberta Regiment, led by 32-year-old Major David Vivian Currie and attached to the Argyll and Sutherland Highlanders of Canada. By August 18, 1944 the task force had reached the vicinity of the French village of St. Lambert-sur-Dives. Charged with closing the ring at Falaise, the Canadians advanced.

Currie, an automobile mechanic, and welder before enlisting in the militia in 1939 and the Canadian Army a year later, led the attack on the village on the morning of August 19 and captured roughly half of it by noon. During the next day and a half, the Canadians clung stubbornly to their advanced positions in St. Lambert-sur-Dives. Several German counterattacks failed to dislodge them, and Currie seized the opportune moment to launch a decisive counterattack. The Canadians captured the remainder of the town and slammed the door on the retreating Germans.

In the aftermath of the fighting, it was determined that the Canadians under Currie's command had killed 300 Germans, wounded 500, and taken 2,100 prisoners. Seven German tanks, 40 other vehicles, and a dozen 88mm flak guns were destroyed. Currie was one of 16 Canadian soldiers to receive the Victoria Cross during World War Two. After the war, he served as sergeant-at-arms of Canada's House of Commons.

COMPANY SERGEANT MAJOR STAN HOLLIS

September 21, 1912 – February 8, 1972

British Army | Victoria Cross

MONTHS BEFORE the outbreak of World War Two, Stan Hollis, a truck driver, former merchant seaman, and father of two, joined the Territorial Army. When Britain went to war, he was ordered to join the 6th Battalion, Green Howards. Within days, he was one of nearly 400,000 soldiers of the British Expeditionary Force (BEF) fighting in France, and Hollis was among nearly 340,000 Allied soldiers evacuated at Dunkirk.

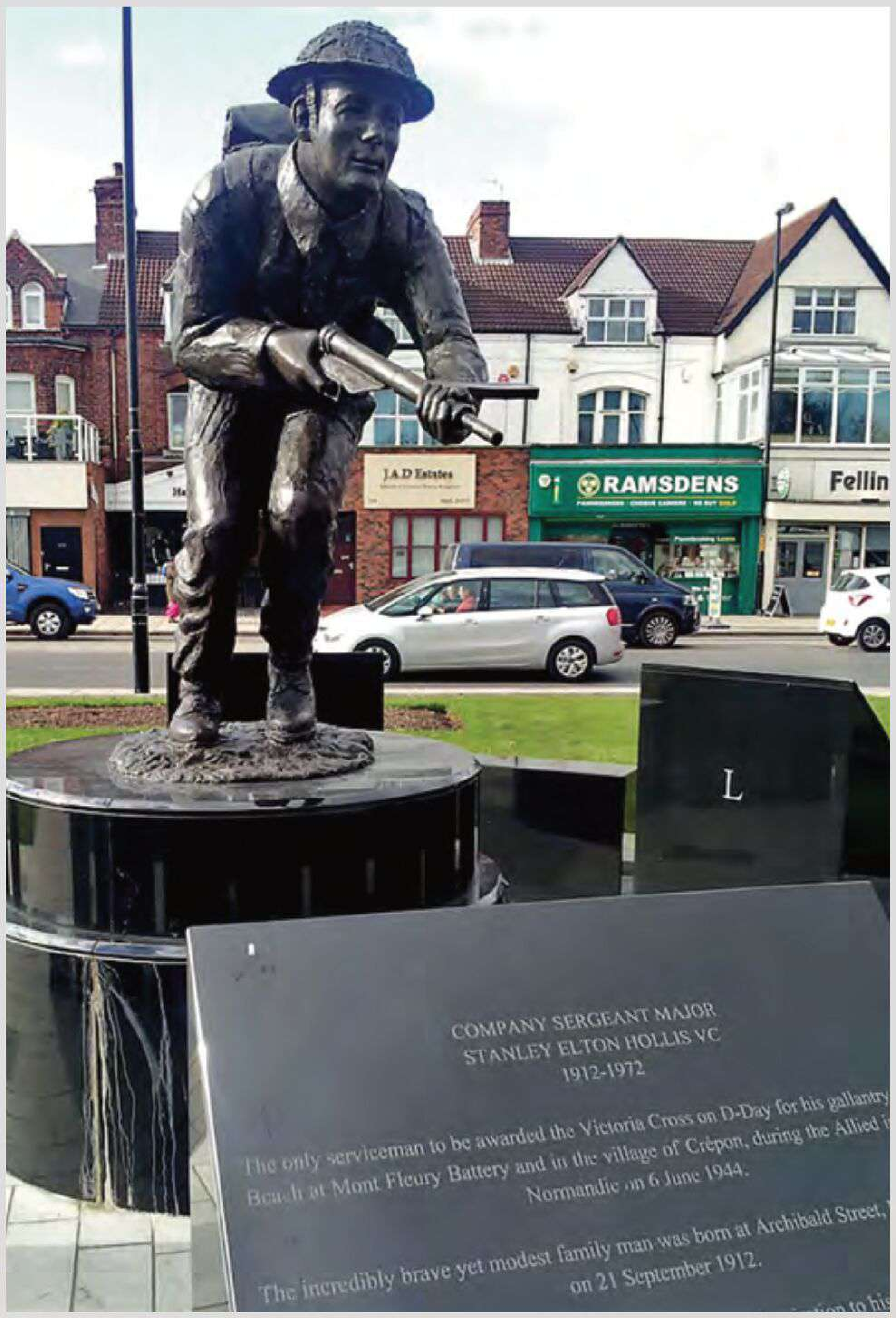
During the following four years, Hollis fought in the North African desert and received promotion to company sergeant major, becoming the 'old man', at the age of roughly 30, since he had survived several major battles.

Hollis, however, found his sternest test of the war on June 6, 1944 landing on Gold Beach in Normandy. Hollis was in command of three machine gun and three mortar teams ordered to provide covering fire for the soldiers moving inland. As he cleared the beach, Hollis confronted a pair of German bunkers that were firing briskly at the men coming ashore. Without hesitation, he dashed toward one of them and unleashed his Sten gun through its firing slit. He then dropped a hand grenade into the bunker and forced the survivors to surrender. Hollis charged again – this time forcing 26 enemy soldiers to come out of the second bunker and surrender.

Hours later, Hollis attacked a German field gun, ringed with protective machine gun nests, and barking steadily at the invasion beaches. Hollis grabbed a PIAT (Projector, Infantry, Anti-Tank) weapon and charged forward along with two other soldiers. His attempt to silence the gun failed, and the German soldiers servicing the piece turned and fired over the heads of the intrepid soldiers who had attacked them.

Hollis returned to the cover of a farmhouse, but then realised the two soldiers accompanying him had failed to return. He remarked, "I took them in. I will try to get them out." He turned and went forward once more, firing a Bren gun from the hip as he charged. The two wayward soldiers reached safety, and Hollis also returned without injury.

In September 1944, Hollis was wounded in the leg and evacuated. The following month, he received the Victoria Cross from King George VI.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COMPANY SERGEANT MAJOR
STANLEY ELTON HOLLIS VC
1912-1972
The only serviceman to be awarded the Victoria Cross on D-Day for his gallantry
Beach at Mont Fleury Battery and in the village of Crépon, during the Allied i
Normandie on 6 June 1944.
The incredibly brave yet modest family man was born at Archibald Street,
on 21 September 1912.

ABOVE Company Sergeant Major Stan Hollis was the only British soldier to earn the Victoria Cross on D-Day. This memorial stands in Middlesbrough, Yorkshire. Creative Commons

BELOW British tanks move inland from Gold Beach after D-Day. Stan Hollis's heroism at the Mont Fleury Battery contributed to the successful landing there. Public Domain

CORPORAL SIDNEY BATES

June 14, 1921 – August 8, 1944

British Army | Victoria Cross

ABOVE British soldiers pause during a lull in the fighting in France in 1944. Sidney Bates gave his life in a desperate struggle against German SS troops. Public Domain

LEFT Corporal Sidney Bates of the Norfolk Regiment fought elements of the 10th SS Panzer Division on August 6, 1944 and received the Victoria Cross. Public Domain

CORPORAL SIDNEY 'Basher' Bates was in command of a machine gun section of Company B, 1st Battalion, Royal Norfolk Regiment, when German fire hit them hard near a small French village on August 6, 1944. Bates had been a carpenter's labourer when he enlisted in the British Army in June 1940, and he received promotion to corporal at age 23.

That fateful day, when elements of the 10th SS Panzer Division attacked the regiment, heavy artillery fire preceded the infantry assault, and mortar shells crashed nearby as the German gunners found effective range. German troops attempted to drive a wedge between the two forward companies of the Norfolks, and Bates' section was on the right of the left-side company, taking casualties steadily.

Attempting to improve his position, Bates realised that nearly 60 German soldiers had penetrated the area. He grabbed a light machine gun and charged at the enemy alone, firing from the hip. He was thrown to the ground by the impact of a German bullet but got up and kept going. Through a storm of enemy fire, he continued with his Sten gun blazing. He was wounded a second time but staggered on, firing as he was able. The startled enemy gunners began to withdraw.

Seconds later, a German mortar blast showered Bates with lethal shrapnel, and he fell mortally wounded. He continued to fire at the enemy until he lost consciousness. Taken to a field hospital, Bates died two days later.

Bates' posthumous Victoria Cross citation appeared in the November 2, 1944 edition of The London Gazette. It lists the location of the battle as Sourdeval, but the fighting actually took place at Pavée, where a memorial commemorates his heroism. Bates was one of five soldiers of the Royal Norfolk Regiment to receive the Victoria Cross during World War Two.

MAJOR ROBERT HENRY CAIN

January 2, 1909 – May 2, 1974

British Army | Victoria Cross

THE ILL-FATED *Operation Market Garden* of September 1944, an Allied airborne and ground thrust into the Netherlands intended to capture vital bridges and pave the way for a quick thrust into Germany's industrial heartland, and possibly end World War Two in Europe by Christmas, is remembered as 'a bridge too far'.

Individual acts of heroism were many during the desperate fight at the Dutch town of Arnhem, and one of the heroes who survived was Major Robert Henry Cain, who received the Victoria Cross for extraordinary gallantry in the face of overwhelming enemy strength.

On September 19, 1944 Major Cain was leading a rifle company of the South Staffordshire Regiment. His company was cut off from the remainder of the battalion, and for the next six days fought for its collective life against the tanks and infantry of a German Waffen SS division. The glider troops were lightly armed and never intended for prolonged engagements with enemy armour. Under heavy fire from roads above and below their positions they held for nearly three hours until they ran out of anti-tank ammunition. Few of the British troopers managed to slip out of the death trap.

Cain commanded the remaining soldiers of the 2nd South Staffordshire Regiment, reaching high ground nearby. However, German artillery shelled the position relentlessly, and enemy tanks forced another withdrawal. Pushed out of the vicinity of Arnhem, Cain joined with the remnants of the Parachute Brigade at the town of Oosterbeek.

ABOVE Major Robert Cain was a one-man tank destroyer during the fighting around Arnhem in *Operation Market Garden*. **Public Domain**

On September 21, Cain took on a German Sturmgeschutze III self-propelled assault gun, which blasted the corner of a house he occupied. He disabled the vehicle with direct hits from a PIAT (Projector, Infantry, Anti-Tank) weapon, and it was later destroyed by a 75mm howitzer. Cain was wounded but refused treatment until the threat had passed. The following morning, Cain fired 50 PIAT rounds, driving off three German tanks. On September 25, he fought off more self-propelled guns with a PIAT and a two-inch mortar.

When Market Garden was over and the remnants of the 1st Airborne Division had been evacuated across the River Rhine, Cain was credited with destroying six enemy tanks and several assault guns.

BELOW British glider troops prepare to move out after landing in a Dutch field during *Operation Market Garden* in September 1944. **Public Domain**

BELOW American soldiers of the 60th Infantry, a regiment that Matt Urban served with, advance warily with the cover of an M4 Sherman medium tank. **Public Domain**

LIEUTENANT COLONEL MATT URBAN

August 25, 1919 – March 4, 1995

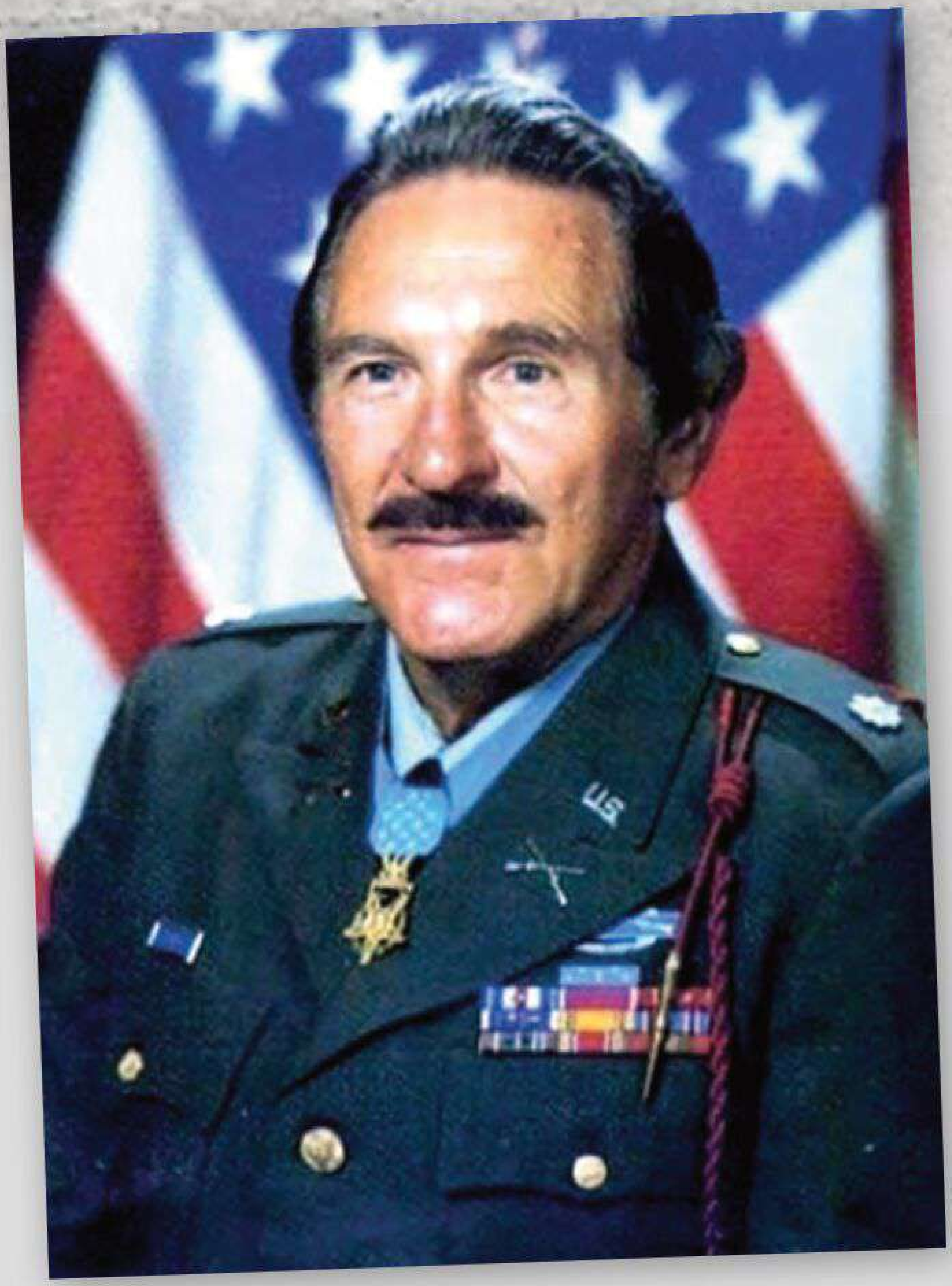
US Army | Medal of Honor; Silver Star; Legion of Merit; Bronze Star; Purple Heart; French Croix de Guerre

MATT URBAN was commissioned a 2nd lieutenant in the US Army in May 1941, six months before the United States entered World War Two. During the course of the conflict, he was wounded seven times, and months after the war ended, he was medically retired with the rank of lieutenant colonel.

During one action in North Africa, Urban annihilated a German patrol, grabbing the nearest enemy soldier and stabbing him to death with a trench knife before tearing the German's machine pistol away and mowing down the other men. In Sicily, Urban and his comrades were attempting to come ashore when a German dive bomber attacked their ship. An anti-aircraft gun's spotter was wounded, and Urban grabbed his binoculars, located the enemy aircraft, and assisted in shooting it down.

Urban came ashore with the 2nd Battalion, 60th Infantry Regiment, at Utah Beach on D-Day. In mid-June, the officer knocked out two German tanks with a bazooka and was wounded in the leg while attempting to fire on a third. A day later, he was wounded in the forearm and evacuated to England. Rather than head for home, he took charge of training a group of 40 soldiers, and when they were shipped to France, he simply went along with them.

Reaching positions of the 2nd Battalion, 9th Infantry Division on July 25, 1944, Urban pulled a wounded soldier to safety under fire and then jumped aboard a Sherman tank, manning its .50-calibre machine gun, and destroying several enemy



ABOVE Lieutenant Colonel Matt Urban received the Medal of Honor nearly 40 years after displaying extraordinary heroism in France. **Public Domain**

strongpoints. By August, he had been wounded twice more, and when his battalion commander was killed, Urban took charge of the formation at the age of 24. Fighting in Belgium a month later, he was shot in the neck while charging an enemy machine gun emplacement. A chaplain gave Urban last rights on the battlefield, but he survived.

Although he had been recommended for the Medal of Honor for his exploits in France, the paperwork had been misplaced. A 1979 inquiry from representative of a disabled veterans group led to the completion of the process, and Urban received his medal from President Jimmy Carter at the White House in 1980.

COMPANY SERGEANT MAJOR GEORGE EARDLEY

May 6, 1912 – September 11, 1991

British Army | Victoria Cross; Military Medal

ABOVE Soldiers of the 4th Battalion, King's Shropshire Light Infantry, Sergeant Eardley's unit, march toward the rear in October 1944 after days in the front line. **Public Domain**

BORN IN Congleton, Cheshire, George Harold Eardley was a non-commissioned officer of the 4th Battalion, King's Shropshire Light Infantry, in the autumn of 1944, and performed heroically in the face of determined enemy resistance at the town of Overloon in the Netherlands.

At age 32, Eardley was an acting sergeant when his platoon was ordered to attack enemy positions in a heavily wooded area on October 16. Heavily armed German Fallschirmjäger, or paratroopers, were defending an area thick with fruit orchards. The enemy fired steadily from concealed positions, and the effort to clear the orchards so that a general advance could resume was stymied about 80 yards from its objective. The British troops were pinned down, and any soldier that dared raise his head would present an inviting target.

ABOVE Sergeant George Harold Eardley destroyed three German machine gun positions during operations in the Netherlands and received the Victoria Cross. **Public Domain**

Nevertheless, Sergeant Eardley spotted one of the enemy machine gun positions and leaped to action, firing a Sten gun as he ran forward. Eardley threw a hand grenade that killed the occupants of the machine gun nest, and within seconds another machine gun opened fire on the exposed soldier. He immediately charged again, swiftly covering 30 yards of open ground, and shooting down both German machine gunners.

From there, the attack moved ahead, but a third enemy machine gun soon opened fire. An infantry section was sent in to dispose of the position but failed and took four casualties. Eardley ordered his own section to lie down and then crawled forward to silence the German machine gun with a well-thrown grenade. The British advance resumed, and its objective was achieved.

Eardley earned the Victoria Cross that day and was later promoted to company sergeant major. His citation appeared in the January 2, 1945, edition of The London Gazette. He survived the war, and a statue honouring his valour was erected in his hometown.

BELOW Soldiers of the U.S. 8th Infantry Regiment advance through the thickly wooded Hürtgen Forest in Germany. Lieutenant Colonel George Mabry, Jr., led a battalion during the fighting there in World War Two.
Public Domain

LIEUTENANT COLONEL GEORGE L. MABRY, JR.

September 14, 1917 – July 13, 1990

US Army | Medal of Honor; Distinguished Service Cross; Distinguished Service Medal; Silver Star; Legion of Merit; Bronze Star; Purple Heart

RIGHT Lieutenant Colonel George Mabry, Jr., pictured later in his career, received the Medal of Honor for valour in the Hürtgen Forest in the autumn of 1944.
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THE HÜRTGEN Forest was dark and forbidding. The fighting there in the autumn of 1944 was among the most savage of World War Two in Europe. While commanding the 2nd Battalion, 8th Infantry Regiment, 4th Division, Lieutenant Colonel George L. Mabry, Jr., knew that his soldiers would be sorely tested during the action, but he led by heroic example.

Mabry had been a fine athlete, playing football and baseball at tiny Presbyterian College in Clinton, South Carolina, near his hometown of Sumter. He was also a captain in the college's ROTC (Reserve Officer Training Corps) programme. He landed at Utah Beach on June 6, 1944, and rose rapidly through the officer ranks, leading his battalion at the age of 27.

Near the Hürtgen Forest town of Schevenhutte, Germany, on November 20, 1944, the leading elements of Mabry's battalion advanced into a minefield during an attack against fixed German positions. Advancing alone, Mabry cleared a path through the minefield and got his command moving forward again. With assistance from other men, he disabled a booby trap that might have killed several American soldiers and quickly captured three Germans he surprised in their foxhole.

Three enemy log bunkers soon blocked the way forward. Mabry kicked in the door of the first and found it deserted. When he did the same at the second, nine Germans rushed him. Mabry hammered one with the butt of his rifle and bayoneted a second before help arrived and the others were killed in hand-to-hand combat. He took on the third bunker, rushing inside and capturing six German soldiers.

Crossing 300 yards under constant enemy fire, the battalion occupied high ground and established a command post, pouring rifle and machine gun fire into Germans on either flank. Mabry had shown the way with exemplary courage and received the Medal of Honor. He remained in the US Army for 35 years, rising to the rank of major general.

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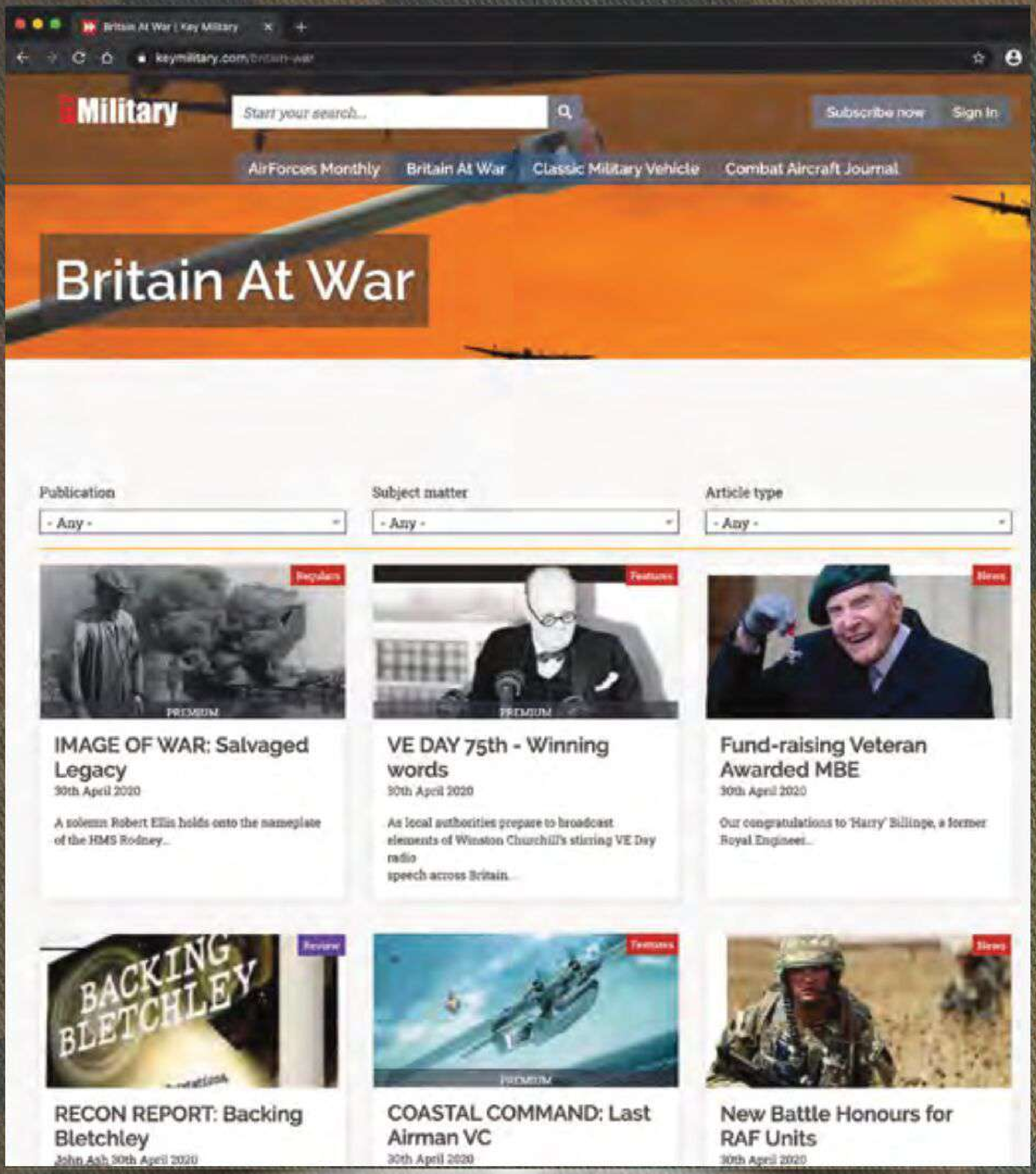
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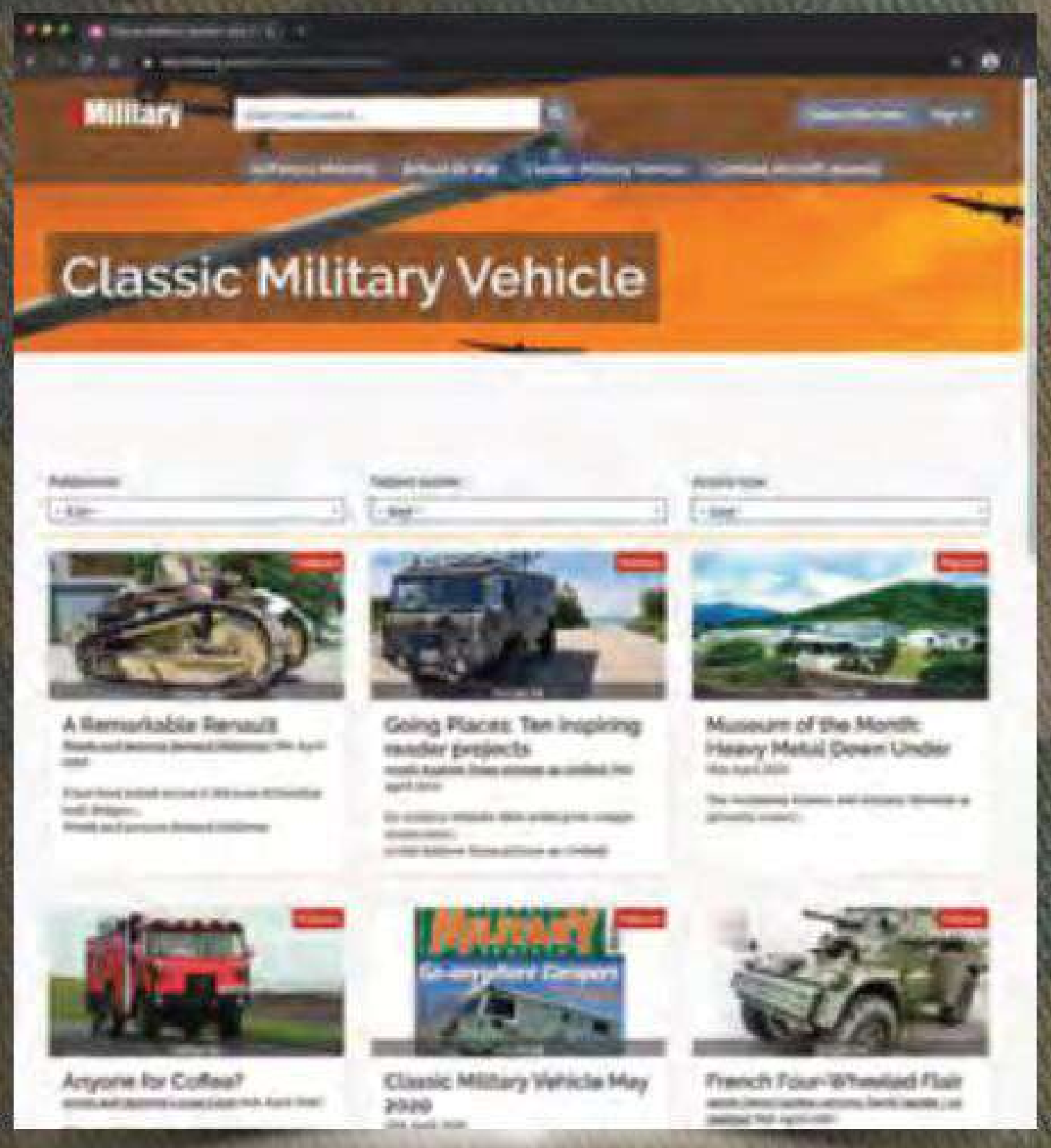
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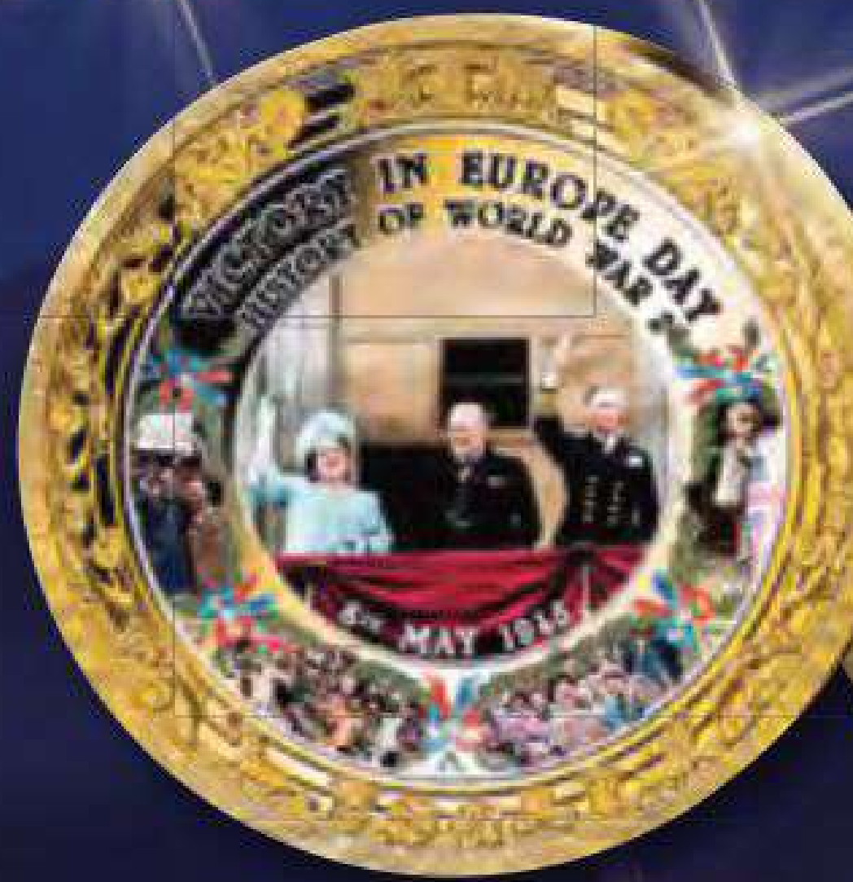
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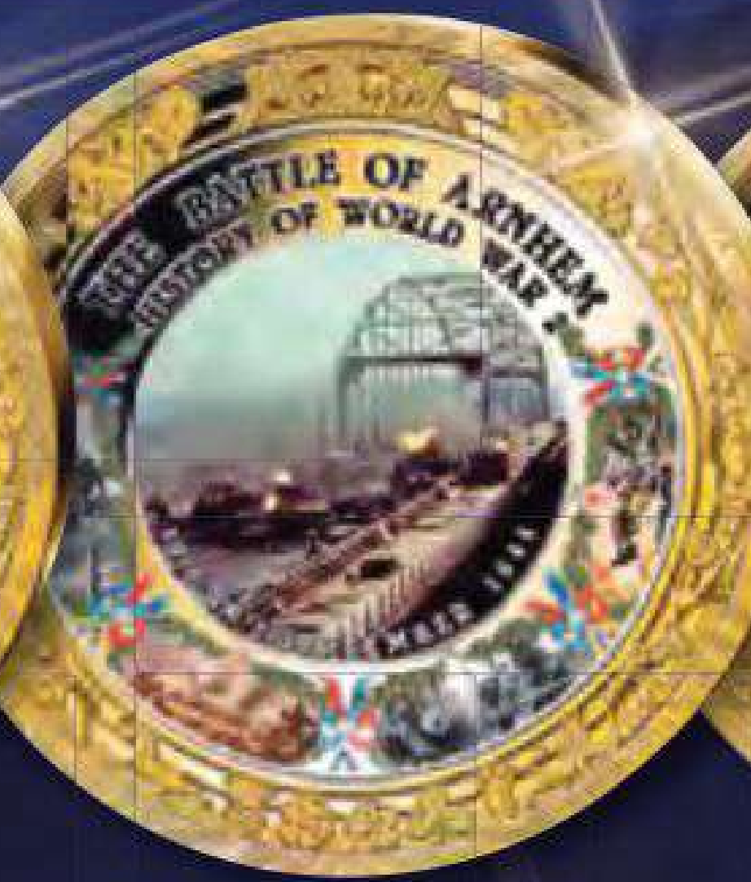
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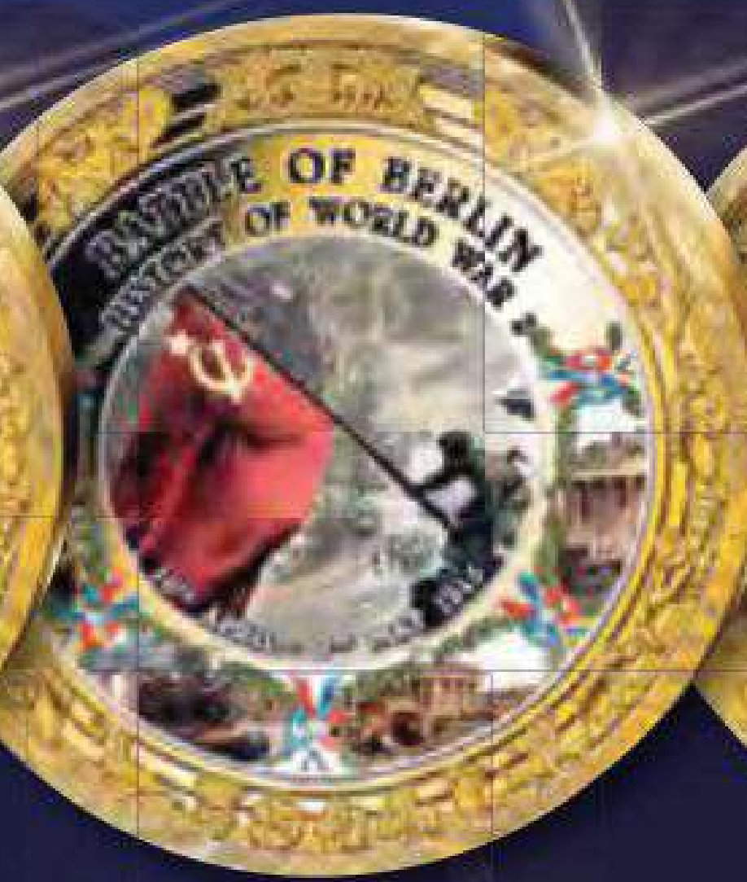
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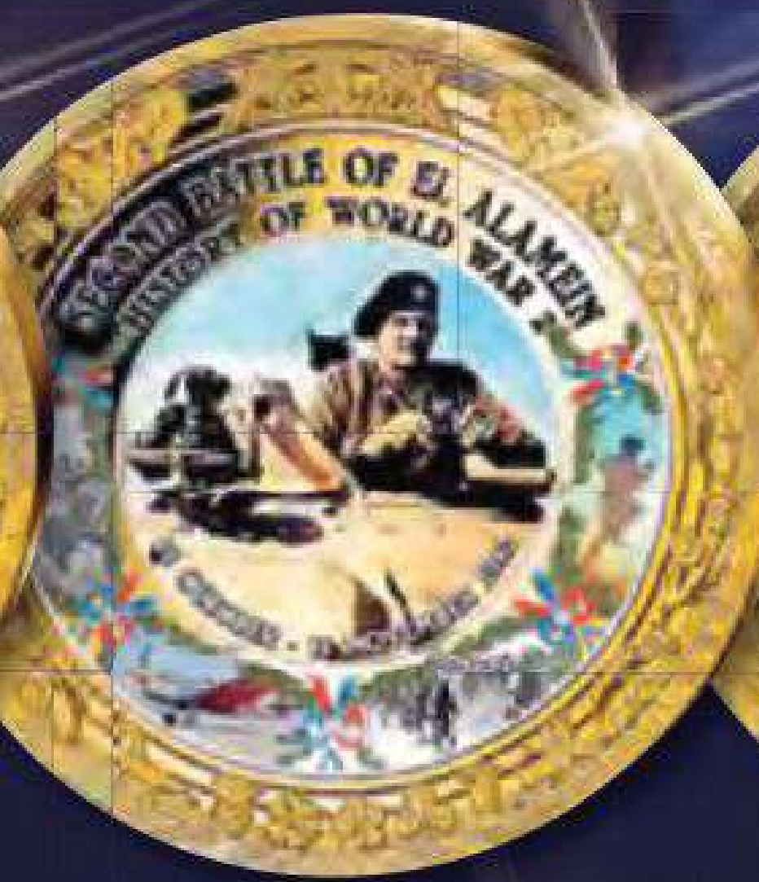
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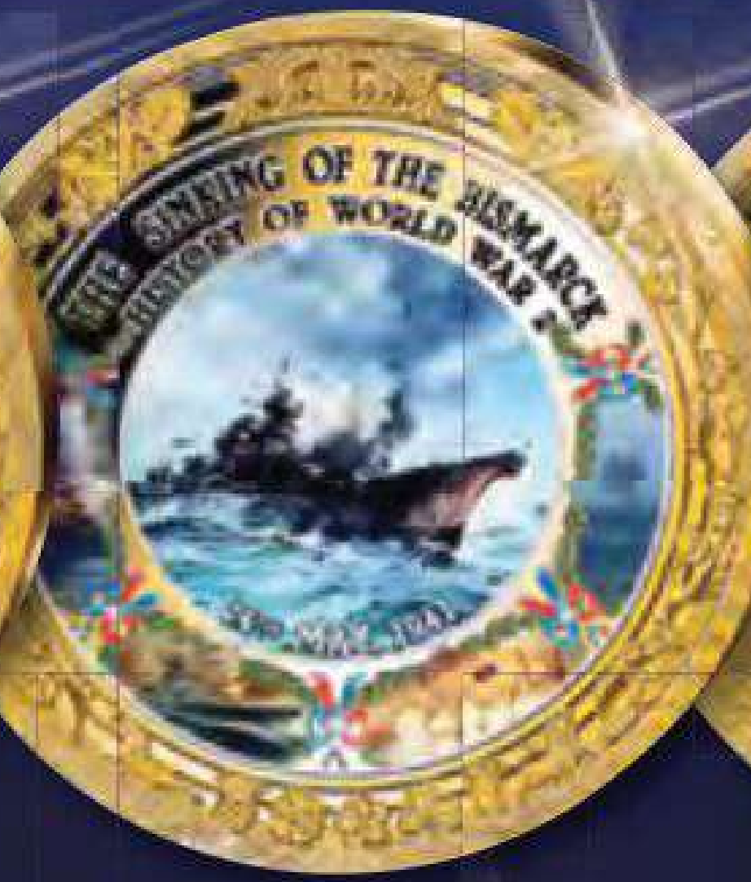
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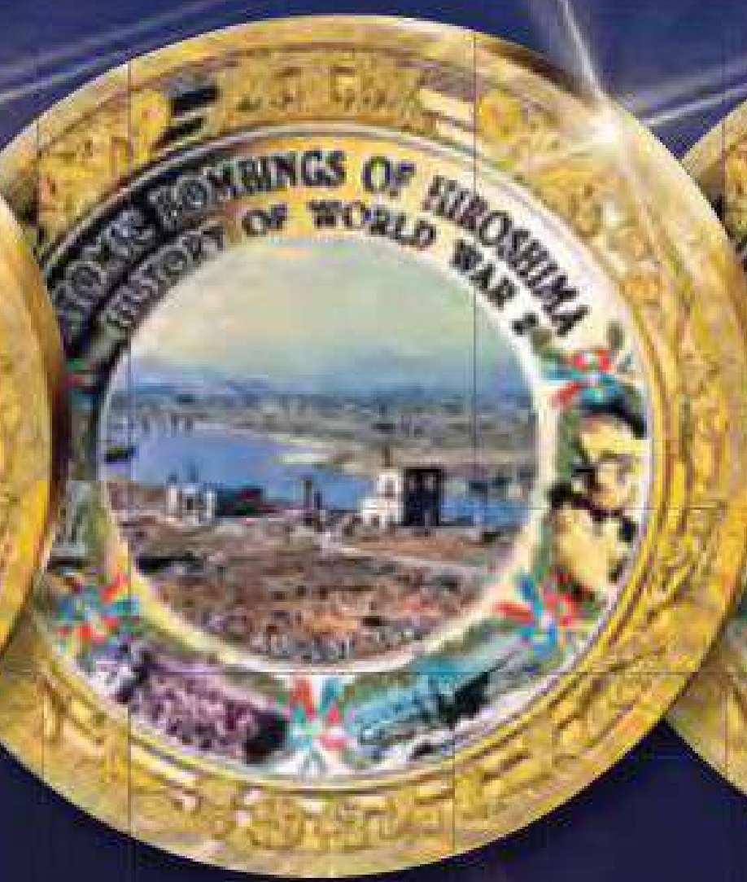
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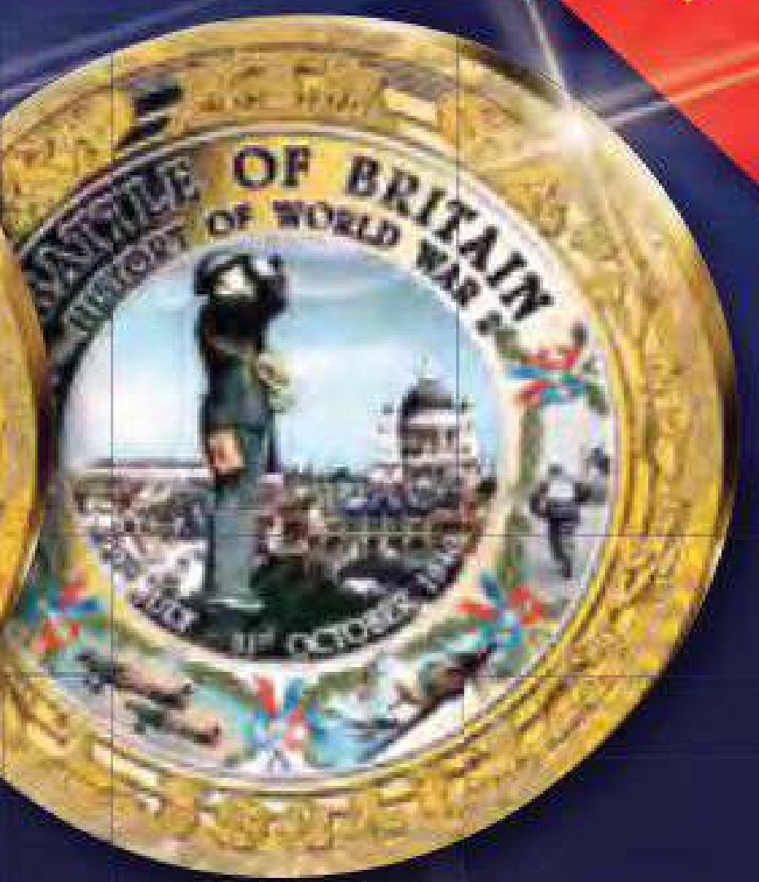
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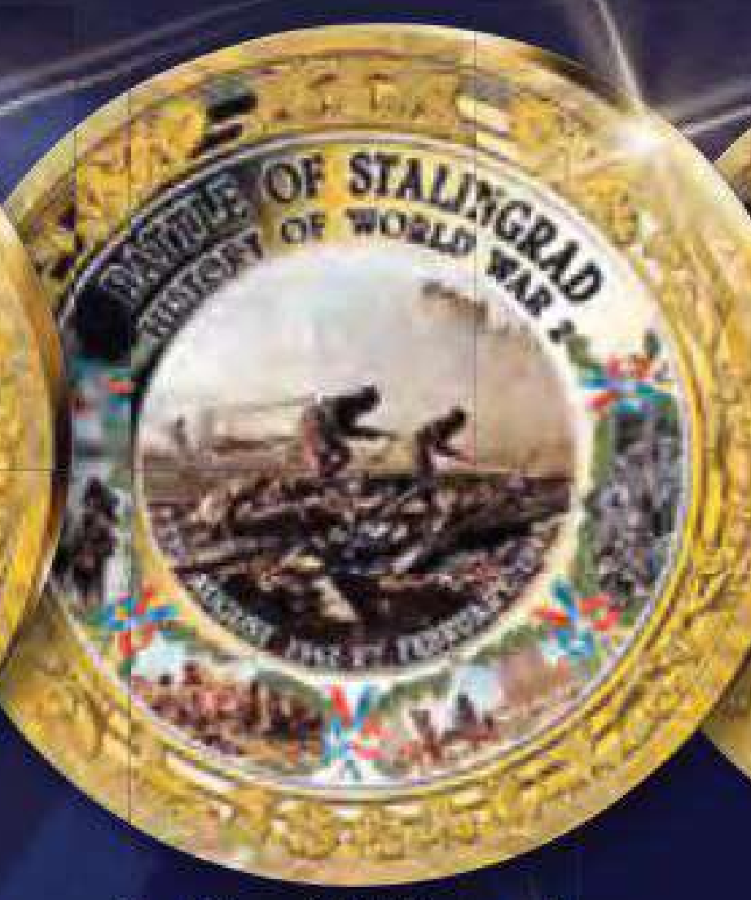
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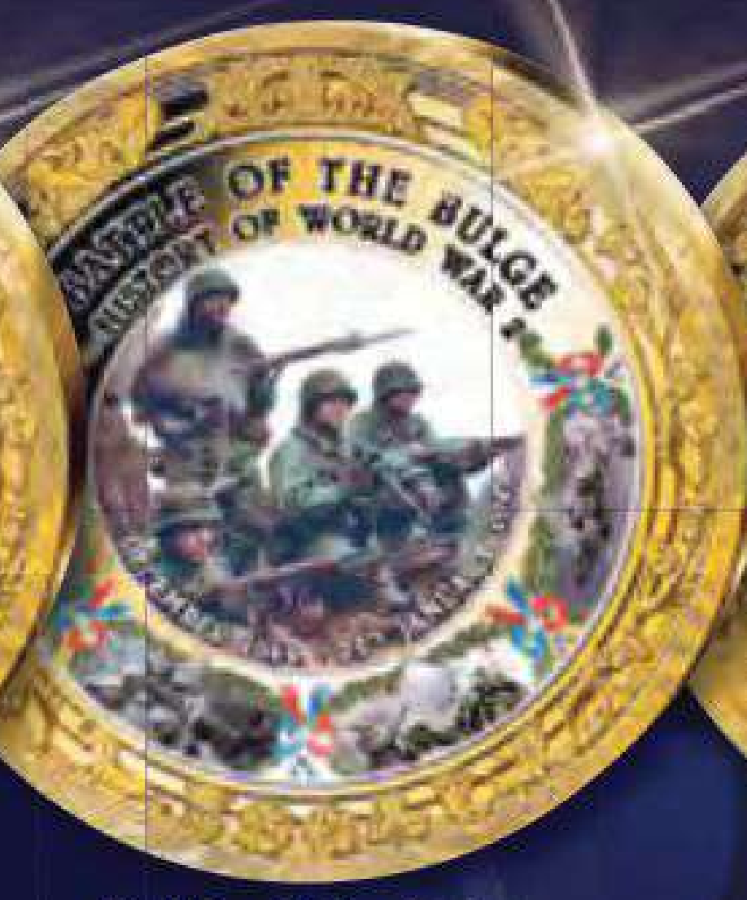
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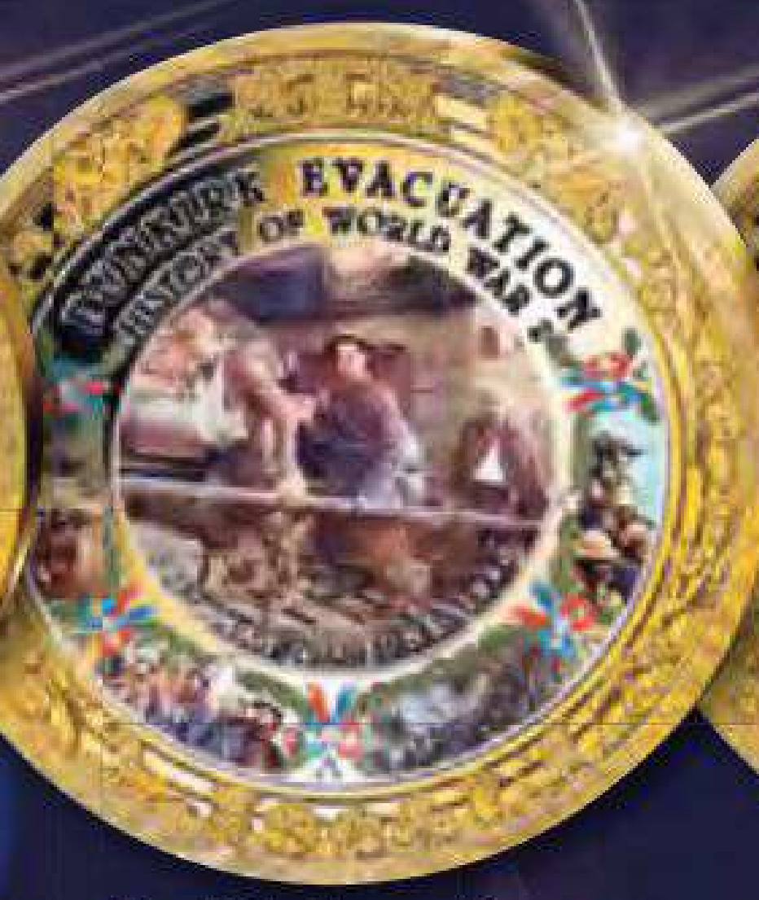
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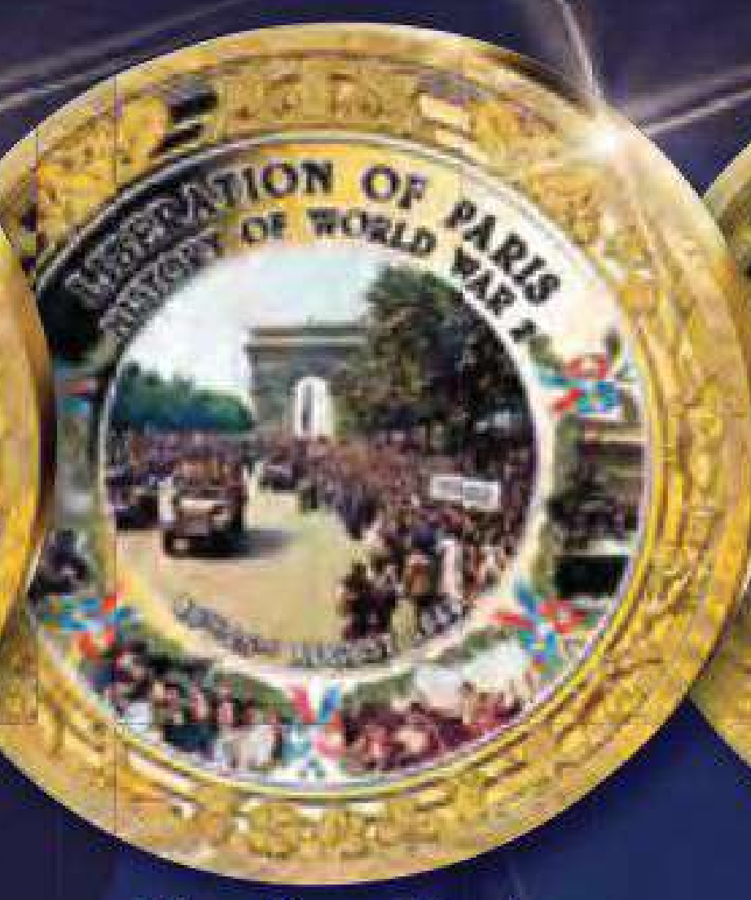
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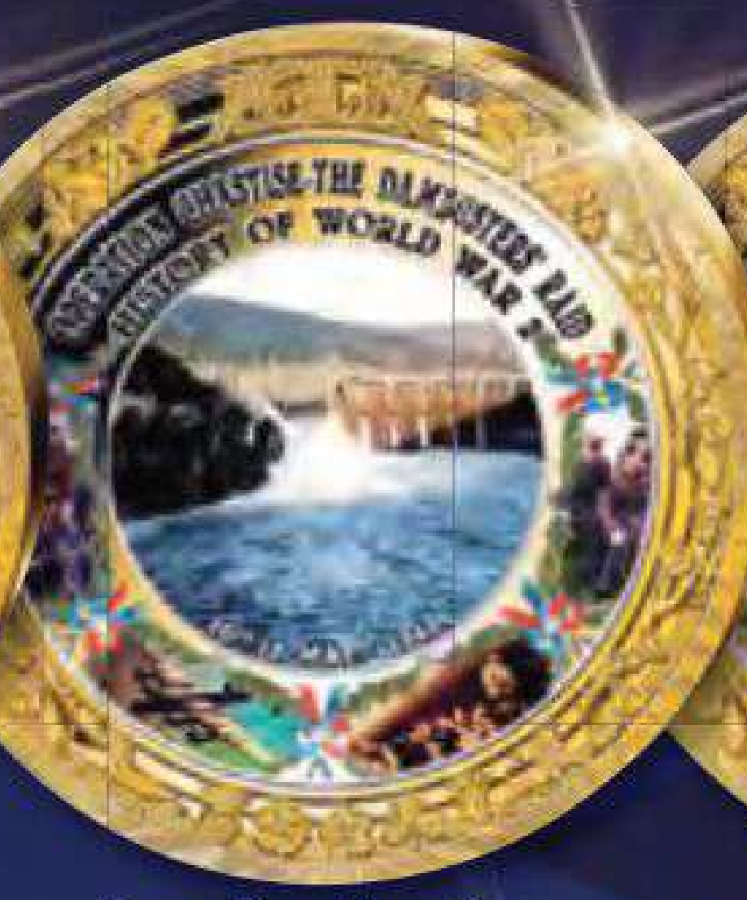
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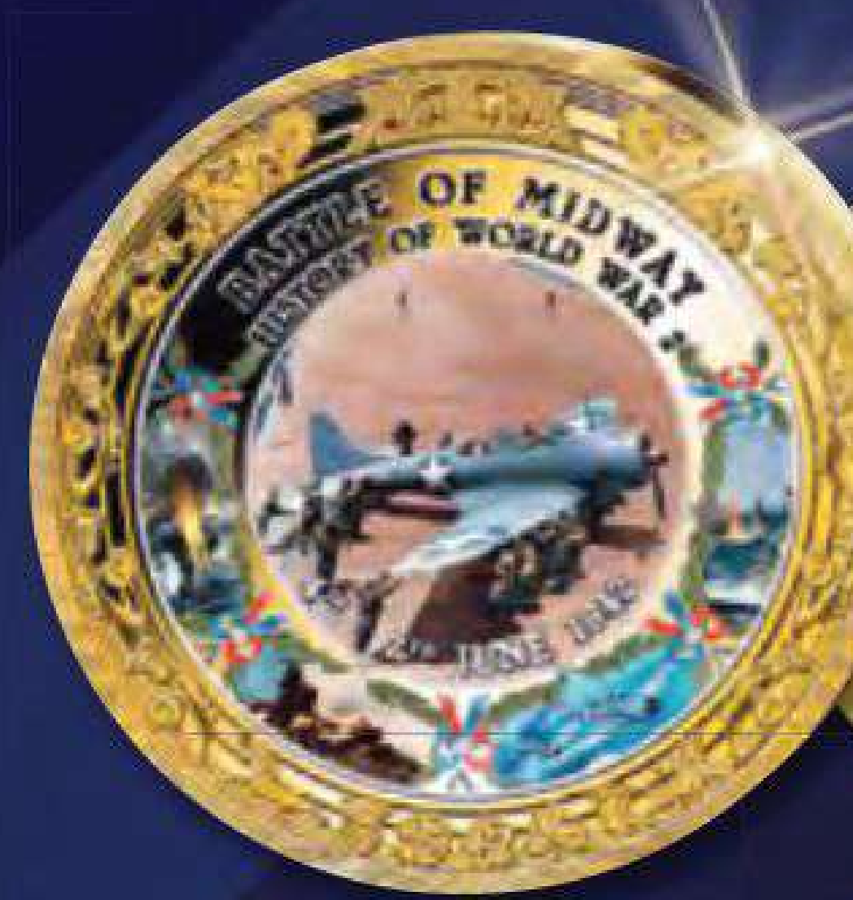
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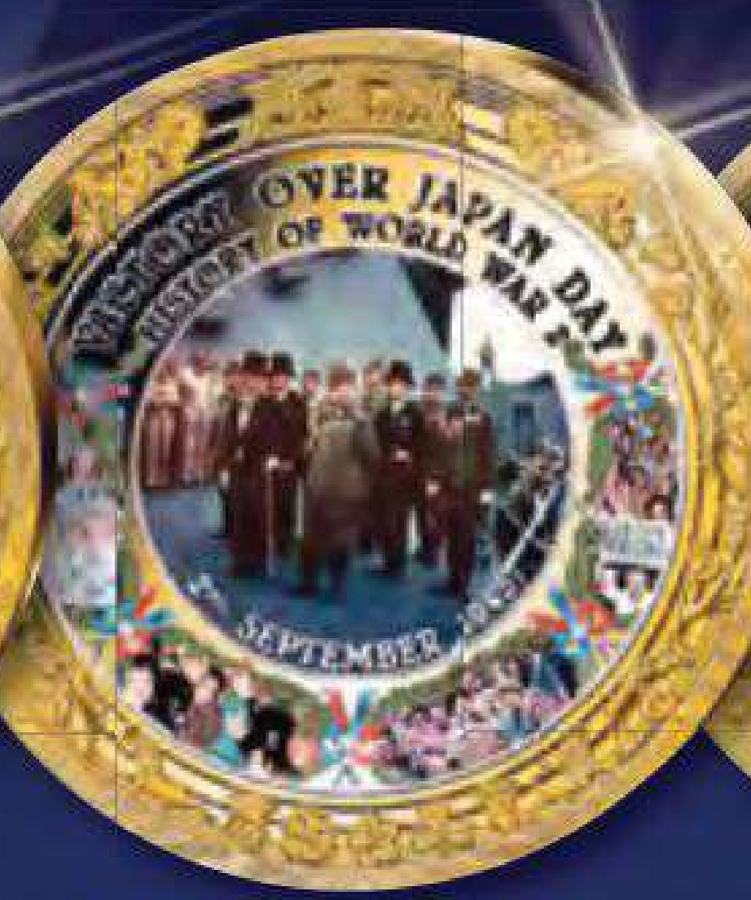
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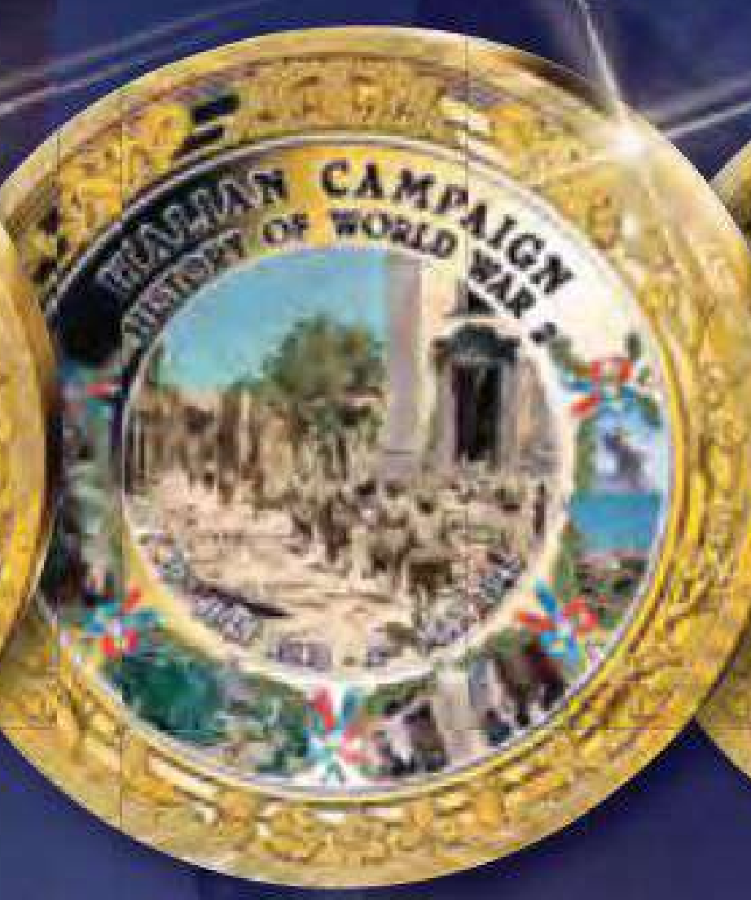
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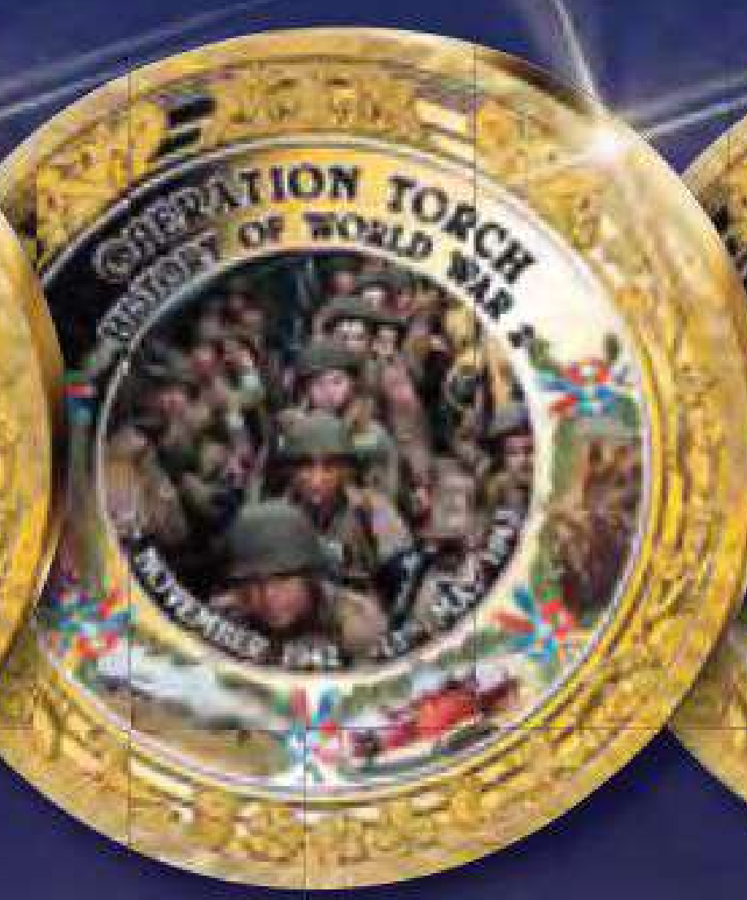
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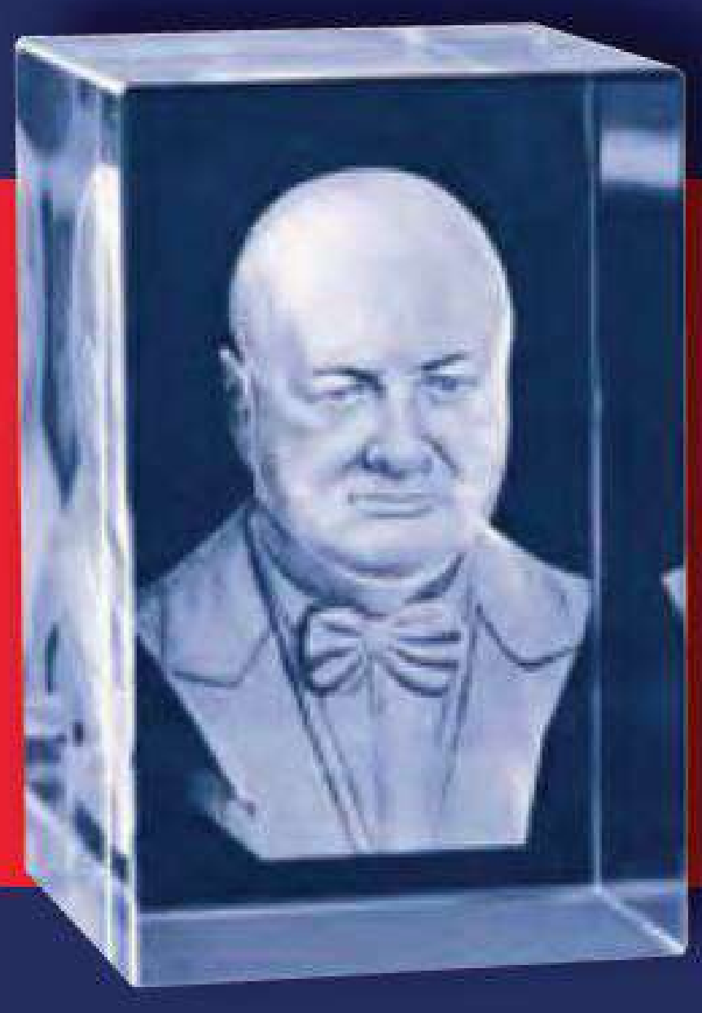

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